

# spare Rib

No 37/30p

P 523/344

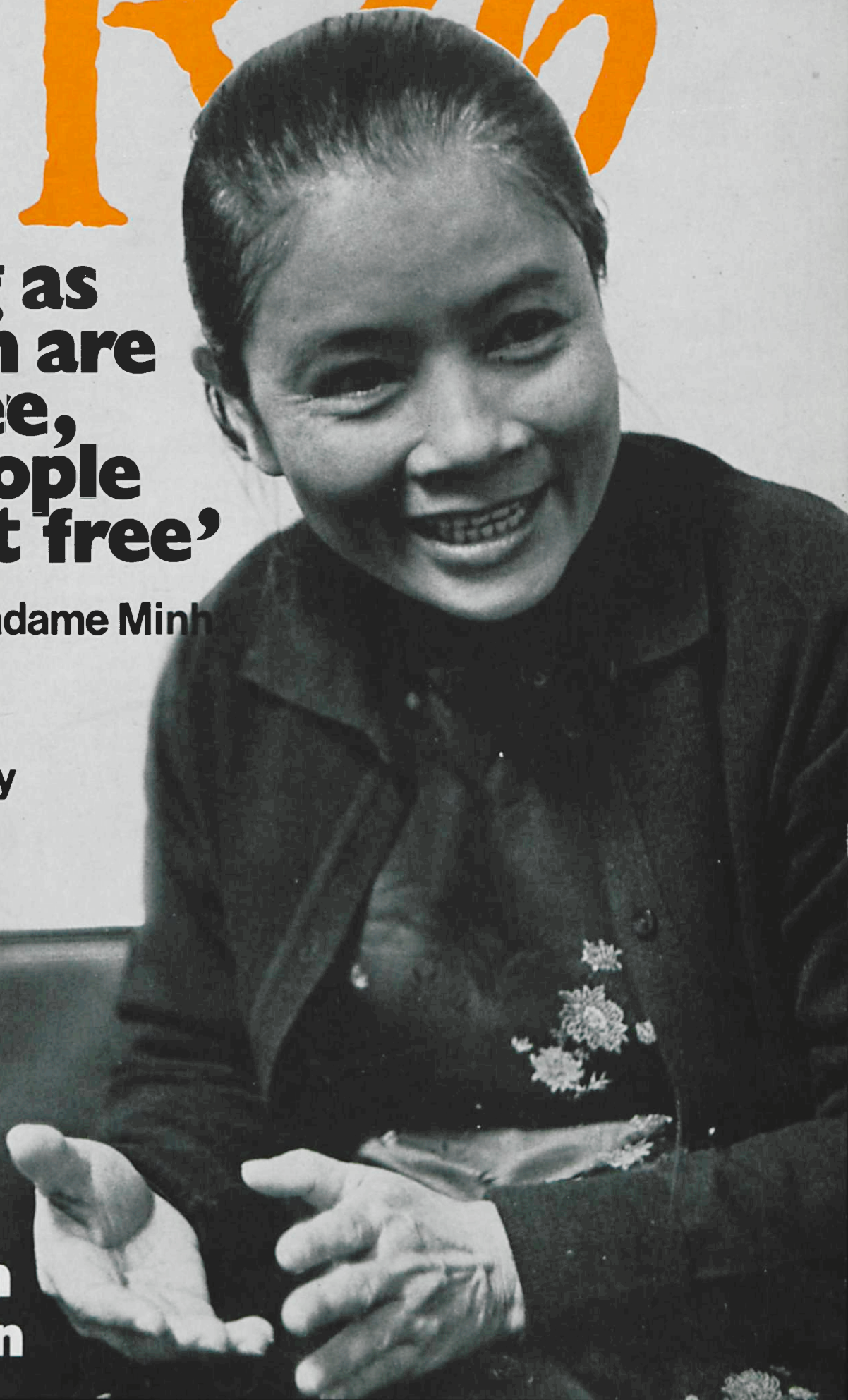
**'So long as  
women are  
not free,  
the people  
are not free'**

Interview: Madame Minh  
of Vietnam's  
Provisional  
Revolutionary  
Government

**Breast  
Cancer**

**Janis  
Joplin**

**Abortion  
Campaign**

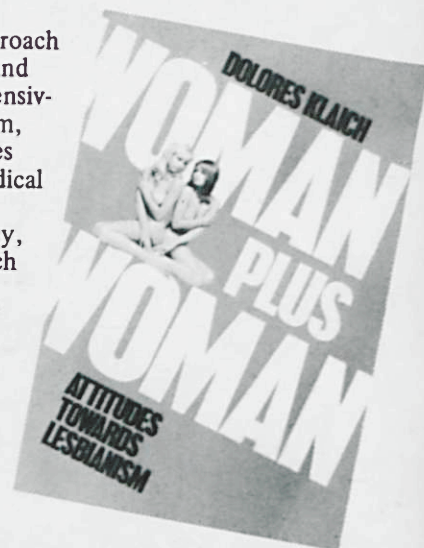




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*Publishers Weekly*

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Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts.

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*Spare Rib* is produced collectively by the following people, some part-time, some full-time: Rose Ades, Sally Doust, Alison Fell, Marion Fudger, Wisty Hoyland, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Marsha Rowe, Ann Scott, Ann Smith, Jane Wilson, Marjan Gerritse.

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# LETTERS

## In Want of a Wife?

Dear *Spare Rib*,  
I was amazed to read the letter from Moira Gray (*Spare Rib* 34, Odds and Sods) in which she says that she is looking for a woman who, in return for rent-free accommodation and harmonious living, will not only care for her child but also do her housework and shopping. It seems to me that what Ms Gray really wants is a wife!

Yours sincerely  
Sue Ryrie  
Liverpool 15

## Men \*

Dear sisters,  
There are things I don't like in your magazine — the socialism isn't libertarian enough, the adulation of the IRA and the state-capitalist dictatorships in Asia, and of course being a man I can't identify with the more radical feminist stuff. But on the whole it helps me a lot.

I can't see the anti-sexist men's movement (though it isn't going anywhere, so it's not a movement) getting to the stage of producing a journal. Perhaps it's better to work through socialist groups. In fact I think (I'm not sure) that it's not a good idea to have an independent men's movement at all. That's because sexism can only be understood as a total system of interactions involving men, women and capitalist society. In a way, this is also an argument against an independent women's movement, but the countervailing reasons women have — needing to separate themselves to gain some self-confidence etc — don't apply to men, or at least less so.

I'd like to see in *Spare Rib* more discussion of the experience, feelings, position etc of men, as oppressors and oppressed. In a lot of women's liberation literature "men" are a sort of black box which oppresses women in minutely analysed ways, but whose internal mechanism is ignored. In order to avoid demoralising sympathy with men, the source of the trouble (though "men" are not the ultimate source) is not examined.

Fraternally  
Stephen Stefan  
London N2

## Common Market \*

Dear *Spare Rib*,  
Come off it Ms Jean Gardiner! The article was entitled "Common Market Referendum: Should Britain Stay In?" and then we were told that "Jean Gardiner explores the arguments on both sides in the run-up... to the referendum in June".

I read the two pages of isolationist nationalistic propaganda and turned over to find the other side of the problem explored. Where was it?

Best wishes  
Helen Bruckner  
Munchen West Germany

## Mastectomy

Dear Madam,  
Following a bi-lateral mastectomy in the London Hospital last October, I was fitted and supplied with a pair of Camp "Tru-Life" breast prothesis in the following December, with the instructions never to immerse them in water as this would prove detrimental and shorten their life.

Like many other women who have had this operation in their middle years, "hot flushes" are making life miserable, and the so-called happy pill has been ruled out by my GP and also the surgeon as being out of the question following a malignancy. Inevitably I find that I am literally bathed in perspiration very many times a day and night, and find that the prothesis get wet and smelly.

Whilst on a routine visit to the Out-Patients Surgical Dept. recently, I took the opportunity to call at the Marie Celeste Samaritan Clinic to explain my problem, and to ask for a similar pair of prothesis to change into when sweaty conditions make continual wear intolerable. The male official who conducted this interview refused this request out of hand, informing me that the NHS will only permit the supply of new prothesis once every two years. He was quite adamant and unmoved by all argument, telling me that they could "air" overnight, although he did entirely agree that after a hot day's work, after bathing, to go out in the evening he would put on a fresh shirt as opposed to the sweaty one worn all day.

After an abortive half hour I left the clinic in despair, having been told to come back in two months time but not to hold out any hopes that a change of heart could be possible. Alternatively I was told I could buy a pair, cost £12.50 each, in my case £25.

Do National Health Authorities always take the view that women must "grin and bear it"? This was very noticeable whilst I was actually in the wards. Men I have visited in hospital say they receive very different treatment. I should have expected that after such a traumatic and demoralising operation the comfort of the patient should be considered part of the post-op treatment. The depression following, although one tries to put on a brave face, most of the time, when combined with menopausal depression, is sometimes just too much.

I will scrape together £25 to be independent of these petty officials, but I deplore this attitude and have nothing but sympathy for anyone entirely at their mercy.

I feel better for having got this off what is left of my chest.

Yours sincerely  
Jessie Golding  
Ilford



## Beaten Up

\* This is what happened to me on Sunday — my husband beat me up on the kitchen floor in front of my two children (both under two). I saw flashes of white in my head and he twisted my arm backwards against the joint — after a long time I crept upstairs and slept in the spare room. He wasn't sorry at all and did not apologise and has not spoken to me since.

I knew there was no women's centre in this town but I searched some old copies of *Spare Rib* on Monday — I was shaking and couldn't look properly. — the only number I could find was Acton and I knew I could never get across London — tubes etc — with a twin pram. I thought there was a centre in Oxford so I rang Citizens' Advice Bureau Oxford (before that I rang Women's Lib Workshop for half an hour and got no reply). CAB Oxford answered. I asked her if there was a women's centre — amused rather superior voice replied "ah battered wives I suppose you mean — are you one?" I was feeling too low to argue — I said yes — she condescendingly gave me a phone number and then instructed me in a no-nonsense schoolmistress manner "It's a very small house and you can't stay there — no, there's no address. You must telephone". So I sat on my stairs and thought "Shit. And I suppose you enjoy talking about your voluntary work — battered wives you know".

I didn't ring the Oxford number I thought it must be owned by Social Services if CAB have so much authority regarding it. I knew my husband wouldn't beat me again for a while anyway. I couldn't waste money travelling to Oxford to be up against a woman like that and then find there were no vacancies (I don't like to upset the kids' routine). So I stayed at home and made an appointment with a solicitor.

Apparently I didn't look bashed up enough. I was probably "borderline" as regards getting an injunction. I might be able to obtain a divorce but my first duty is to try for a reconciliation — yes — I, the person who was beaten, should contact a social worker and try to effect a reconciliation. And as "marriage is a contract" I am supposedly wrong to move into the spare room because my husband has "a right to access" (to me).

I know I can't win. The reason I wrote was (a) I was so angry that the CAB should purport to help battered women and speak to me in such a rude, supercilious manner and (b) I received *Spare Rib* 35 today and still can't find a list of women's centres. I should like to suggest that this be standard in every issue.

My solicitor says it was an isolated case (last time was two years ago). I suppose it's like dogs being allowed a first bite.  
Jane

## Opposing Abortion \*

Dear Editor,  
I totally oppose your view that abortion liberates women. With the ample availability of contraceptives I fail to recognise any need for an abortion act at all, as the hard cases were aborted prior to the 1967 Abortion Act.

With this liberal abortion policy we have at present single girls who become pregnant are being pressurised into having abortions simply because the Social Services are not doing their jobs properly. It seems as if we are returning to the Victorian way of thinking that the illegitimate child is an inferior being with no right to life.

J. Jones  
Uddingston  
Glasgow  
Scotland

Dear Editor,  
Thank you for your article about James White's Bill and for the useful list of MPs who voted for a second reading. I see that you have marked those MPs "known to be" Roman Catholics. I wonder if any more have been denounced to you? Would you in different circumstances have published a list of MPs indicating who were Jews or Moslems? I don't really think so. Please don't imagine that only Catholics oppose abortion or indeed that all Catholics are anti-abortion.  
Yours faithfully  
C. Winder  
Cardiff

We indicated which MPs supporting James White's Bill were Catholic so that women wanting to express their opposition to the Bill could ask them in particular not to let any moral principles they might have stand in the way of women who need abortions.

## Cohabitation Rule.

Dear *Spare Rib*,  
I am writing to publicise a battle which my boyfriend and I fought recently with the DHSS over the so-called cohabitation rule. If our case had been taken up in the lawcourt it would, I think, have been a test case.

Being unemployed, my boyfriend went to claim supplementary benefit. When asked how much rent he paid, he stated truthfully that he paid half the rent for our house. This led on to questions about whom he shared it with etc, to which he answered truthfully that it was me and that I was employed at the time.

They immediately assumed that we were cohabiting (whatever that implies!) and that therefore we would be assessed jointly. They sent me a



form asking for details of my place of work, salary etc, which I did not complete. I wrote a letter explaining that the form was nothing to do with me as my boyfriend had claimed supplementary benefit for himself only, and that although it was true that we lived in the same house we were financially independent and neither of us expected, nor would accept, financial support from the other. My boyfriend wrote a similar letter threatening legal action.

Obviously not wishing to go to court over the matter the DHSS submitted. My boyfriend received supplementary benefit assessed as for a single person throughout the time he was unemployed.

The point was that we did not deny, as have couples in the past, that we were "cohabiting". We admitted living together, but made clear our financial independence. It was sickening that having carefully decided not to marry, and accepted the many social and financial disadvantages, we should then be treated as a married couple against our will. If we had accepted this and I had agreed to support my boyfriend to some extent, I would have signed away my rights as a single woman, and would probably never have been able to claim any benefit myself as I would be classed as dependent on him.

Yours in sisterhood  
Laura Schwitzer  
Norwich

### Abandoned \*

Dear Spare Rib,  
I've suddenly woken up after three years to find I've "done" nothing except live with a man. He's gone now and I'm completely lost. I've talked about and agreed with the attitudes behind Women's Liberation without ever being directly affected by them. Until today and I wake to find that I'm hopeless. I did all the washing in the bathtub and it took hours - John always took it to the launderette in his car (his, note, I don't even drive). The flat a week later is still covered in empty bottles from the party we had - because I daren't go to the pub alone to take them back.

Everything I know I learned from him - even your magazine he ordered - I wouldn't know where to go to buy a copy. The isolation is incredible - where are the friends gone? His friends of course and they've gone with him. How do I fix the toilet? How do I pay the rent? What about the furniture? Even the sheets are his. What about the records, there aren't any instructions about changing the needle. Perhaps I should read that Female Eunuch book he bought me for Christmas 73.

Immediate reaction is to go after him "Hey you, I'm one of those possessions of yours remember - I need feeding and clothing, you can't just walk out." But he can because he did so how does anyone else cope with being liberated because I'd like to know.

Love  
Jill  
Dumbarton  
Scotland

### Smashing Windows \*

Dear Spare Rib,

As an ardent supporter of the working class struggle, and, therefore, of course, the women's equality movement, I was amazed and disgusted at the demonstration by a group of women in London on 19th April. How can our cause be recognised by the socialist people of this country when women, supposedly representing the Women's Liberation Movement, smash windows in the Transport House building? I fully realise that many women, including myself, think that the Women's Charter leaves a lot of inequalities still in our society. My question is: are we gaining support and respect from our working class allies, both male and female, by smashing windows at their party headquarters?

We cannot see our struggle in isolation; it is part of the whole working class struggle against the inequalities in our society. We must work together in solidarity with the socialist party and earn the respect which our cause deserves. The action of the women on that Saturday merely gave good copy to the capitalist press in their obvious desire to ridicule the whole Women's Liberation Movement.

Sally Shooter  
Stoke on Trent

### Agnes Smedley

Dear Spare Rib,

Beatrice Campbell's review of *Daughter of Earth* was very welcome, but raised one major question. How far can we read into a semi-autobiographical novel the real biography of the novelist? Obviously the use of such a form opens up readers to that particular confusion, but it is also important to recognise the fictional nature of the enterprise.

Whether or not she was writing "without the support of a women's movement" is only knowable by turning to the experience of Agnes Smedley's own life. From her other writings, it is clear that she was engaged in debate with some feminist tendencies - she was, for example, scornful of those women who travelled in China and narrowed down their perspective to the position of women in China, rather than going further and understanding the struggle of the whole Chinese people. But at the same time in Yenan she apparently did put forward the political arguments for "free love" feminism.

Similarly, Bea writes that "she was clearly not informed by the experience of psychoanalysis". In fact *Daughter of Earth*, which Agnes Smedley described as "a desperate attempt to re-orient my life", was written after a long period of psychoanalysis. It is perhaps worth quoting what she wrote about her life at that time - the early twenties in Germany - in her book *Battle Hymn of China*.

"The circumstances of my youth, combined with the endless difficulties of my life with Virendranath in Germany, drove me almost to the verge of insanity . . . My desire to live ebbed and I lay ill for nearly three years . . . When all else failed, I was

introduced to a woman nerve specialist, a former associate of Freud . . . My psychoanalysis began, and continued tortuously for two years. During this infinite suffering one image haunted my sleeping and my waking: I held a small Chinese vase in my outstretched palm and contemplated its beauty. A crack kept growing down the side, the vase broke, and the fragment rolled out of my outstretched palm. It seemed a symbol of my life."

In sisterhood  
Rosalind Delmar  
London SW1

### Heterochauvinism

Dear Spare Rib,

Your support of lesbians in No 34 editorial is mere tokenism, because the rest of your editorial assumes a heterochauvinist norm throughout. All your analysis is in terms of patterns within the heterosexual structure rather than analysis of the structure itself. Specifically:

- (1) You constantly refer to reproductive issues (sterilisation, nurseries, contraception, abortion, wife-battering, housewives etc), and only twice to lesbianism.
- (2) You refer to examples of magazine-escapism, but you don't point out the heterosexual assumptions of those examples.
- (3) You refer to the sexual stereotyping of male and female, but not to the similar stereotyping of female and female (butch/femme) which puts down lesbians.
- (4) You criticise the heterosexual norm of women's magazines, but you still imply that norm. Your comments question only the roles expected within that norm: man as deserter, woman as manipulator.

The same bias runs through the rest of the magazine. Obvious examples:

- (1) The front cover shows a woman and child, and refers to abortion.
- (2) Articles on battered wives, the abortion act, childcare, infant milk, heterosexual prostitution, a heterosexual artist.
- (3) A heterosexual short story.
- (4) Reviews of two heterosexual books, a heterosexual play, and a heterosexual film, which make no criticism of the heterosexual bias. Only the *California Split* review touches on homosexuality.

More subtle examples:

- (1) The review of *Female Friends* doesn't mention the relationships between the three women, only their relationships with men.
  - (2) The review of *My Mother Says* details the general structure of sexual oppression - ignorance about sex, embarrassed mothers, impersonal education, lack of mutual trust and support etc - but doesn't point out that this structure oppresses lesbians as much as heterosexuals.
  - (3) The review of *No Kiss For Mother* doesn't point out the most obvious aspect of mother's kisses - initiation into heterosexuality. To reject her kisses is, among other things, to be homosexual. On the mother's side, her desire to keep kissing her son may be a denial of her lesbianism.
- Love and struggle  
Nick Rogers  
London NW8

### Free Thinker

Dear Spare Rib,

Came across an early quote on the necessity for a women's magazine, which readers might be interested in:

"We ought to have a *Woman's Journal* - edited by women, contributed to by women, and in every sense an exponent of womanly thought and an advocate of women's rights. Hints and suggestions might be accepted from men, but no interference, no dictation, no direction. For well or ill, skillfully or unskillfully, the act should be their own in every sense."

The author was George Jacob Holyoake, an early free thinker and radical, writing in the *Free Press* in 1847. The passage is reproduced in his *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life* (3rd ed, London 1893, vol I, p224), which contains a number of references to the women's rights movement in the mid-nineteenth century, including the attitudes of a number of notable (male) politicians. Holyoake himself was unequivocally for female suffrage at the same time as male suffrage - a view not shared by many of his contemporaries throughout his long life.

Best wishes  
John Noyce  
Librarians for Social Change  
Brighton

### Outside Society

Dear Spare Rib,

As a prostitute, a reasonably intelligent and aware one but never the less a prostitute - I feel the lack of political status very strongly indeed.

In my opinion we are (and have been throughout the history of civilised society) discriminated against more than any other group that lives outside society. And live outside society we do.

Any publican or restaurant owner may be prosecuted for serving us even if we are just eating or drinking. Any people who live with us may find her or himself in court. Our children may be taken from us at any time. We are at the mercy of blackmailers and gossipmongers. And try telling someone at a party or political meeting what you do for a living! I can tell you from experience - it's one way to get yourself noticed!

Let's get rid of the peroxide blonde, cabbages will do for brains images. Any of you out there interested in change, whether hookers or not, I'd be pleased to hear from you - if you write to me c/o Spare Rib I'll reply to all letters.

In solidarity  
Gerrie Moore  
London NW1

\* indicates that the letter has been cut

Jane Kenrick wrote the editorial reply *Our Birth Right for a Mess of Pottage?* published in the last issue of Spare Rib (June No. 36). We wish to thank her for the work involved and to apologise for leaving her name off.



# SHORTLIST

Compiled by Jill Nicholls. Please send any information to Shortlist, *Spare Rib*, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS.

## events

### Women and Politics

Study conference June 27-29 at Polytechnic of Central London. Black women in Britain, women in Northern Ireland, the politics of sexuality and the family. Fee £2, creche at small extra charge. Details/enrolment Short Course Unit, PCL, 35 Marylebone Road, London NW1 (01-486 5811 ext 252).

### Sappho Disco

June 28, from 8 to 12 midnight, at the Sols Arms Pub, Hampstead Road, London NW1. Women only. 50p.

### Wandsworth Women's Festival

From June 27 to July 4 at Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11. Dancing, theatre, films, talks, handywoman workshop. Contact Caroline Langridge, 01-673 5236.

### One Parent Families

National demonstration in London, July 2. Assemble Hyde Park Corner, 12.30pm. Contact Gingerbread, 9 Poland Street, London W1 (01-734 9014).

### National Newspaper

The second one-day conference is on July 5 at Essex Road Women's Centre, 108 Essex Road, London N1.

### Laurieston Hall

"Self-structuring" week for women only, July 5-12, at Laurieston Hall, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland (see *Spare Rib* 35). Cost £1.50 a day, kids half, babies free.

### Communist University

July 12-20 at the University of London Union. Includes two women's courses - 1) The Family 2) Women in Society. Details from Sally Hibbin, Women's Course Organiser, Communist University, 16 King Street, London WC2. Fee of £5 covers all courses, creche and evening events.

### Weekend Workshop

An intensive workshop for women artists and art historians July 18-20 at the Franklin School, 43 Adelaide Road, London NW3 (01-722 0562). 50p *Womanhouse*, a film about a project by students in the Feminist Art Program in California, will be shown.

### Connections

"We are inviting people to come and live, work, play, learn, be around, self-organise together this summer. And talk about the connections between all the big macro-political fragments, and especially, between these and our own daily lives." Over four weeks, July 26-August 22. See

(and ideas) to Laurieston Hall. Registration £2; cost about £1.50 per day (kids half-price).

## groups

### Women in "Male" Jobs

Meet on the last Tuesday in the month at Essex Road Women's Centre, 108 Essex Road, London N1. To discuss the problems of obtaining skills, finding work, coping with two jobs (one being at home), facing hostile reactions to women doing traditionally male work, our relation to the trade union movement and possible use of the anti-discrimination bill as a base from which to fight.

### Women and Psychology

Do you work in or study psychology and feel the need of support? Then write to Janet Seed, Department of Psychology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, giving your name, address, job, place of work, area of interest, books you've found useful or outrageous, etc. She wants to compile a contact list so that women working in similar fields can form discussion groups, women on psychology courses can challenge biased lectures, women's groups can be set up within departments, etc. Send sae for copy of contact list and booklist.

## arts



Alexis Hunter will be showing a series of photo-realist paintings (based on the expression of male sexuality through personal decoration) along with work by Andrew McAlpine (holograms) and Rodney Fumpston (etchings) at New Zealand House, Haymarket, London W1, from June 24 to July 11. Above is a close-up of number 2.

## campaigns

### Legal and Financial Independence

The Occupational Pensions Board is looking at discrimination against women in occupational pensions schemes. The Legal and Financial Independence group is submitting evidence and would like to hear details of discrimination in individual schemes. Please write, or send a copy of your scheme, to 7 Killieser Ave, London SW2.

### Equal Pay and Opportunity Campaign

A pressure group of women and men who want to work towards equality in the field of employment. The group includes journalists, especially from publications on industrial relations etc, trade union researchers, personnel managers and management consultants. They are prepared to work with employers, management staff, trade unionists, in fact anyone involved in employment.

The group's first publication, *Sex Discrimination and Personnel Policy* (60p, 13pp), states that, "The purpose of this guide is to assist employers to avoid policy or behaviour which may be regarded as discriminatory against women because they are women". But this is not a guide to the loopholes in the legislation; it is an attempt to

encourage employers to act positively to end sex discrimination, an optimistic hope given the response of many employers to other legislation intended to protect workers. Perhaps more useful will be the group's proposed guide for employees.

Contact EPOC at 20 Canonbury Square, London N1 or phone Pamela Pocock 01-398 1401 or Susanne Lawrence 01-928 3388 ext 127.

Cynthia Jenkins

## projects

### Conference Workshop Notes

Manchester women want to write a booklet on the National Conference 1975, including reports of all the workshops. Please send any notes on any workshop to the Women's Centre, 218 Upper Brook Street, Manchester 13.

### International Women's Party

"We want to have a party that is our own, autonomous of the 'official' idea of International Women's Year. For women only and their children. We will celebrate our own identity, our own creativity. We want to play, sing, dance, exchange." Probably for a weekend in July, perhaps in Italy. Contact International Women's Party, c/o GLIFE, 7 Rue des Prouvaires, 75001 PARIS.



## Women's Research Centre

Open to anyone doing research on women – *not* necessarily within a university. Library of books and journals; index of work completed and in progress. Seminars roughly fortnightly (the next are July 11 and 18!) on Fridays at 7.30. Seminars open to men, though the place is run by women. 158 N. Gower Street, London NW1. Phone 01-388 0882, Friday afternoon and evening only.

## Rights for Women

To raise money to fight for women's rights the NCCL has launched a collective fund. Offers of help to Rights for Women Collective Fund, NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9DE.

# theatre

## Soft Or A Girl?

by John McGrath

Two sentries on duty during the Blitz are blasted into the 70's to see themselves as they will be – one a worn-out working class socialist, out of touch with his "soft", accepting son; the other a property speculator.

They also see four women, confusingly caricatured. A left-wing student who talks "like a geezer", and a "real woman" who gets a bungalow in Surrey out of the sadistic army officer she marries – and crushes, as we see in some long and laborious porn scenes. Mrs Sweeney in an artist's smock, painting by numbers in her front yard, gets her kicks of an afternoon with the delivery boy. And his charlady-mother, straight from *Till Death Us Do Part*, legs apart to show her drawers – "Wife and mother, life-blood and doormat. Do you think she's happy?"

A musical comedy about the class struggle, rambunctious and rhetorical, written for Liverpool, updated and adapted for the East End. At the Half Moon Theatre, 27 Alie Street, London E1 (01-480 6465) until at least June 28. Tickets 50p.

# pamphlets

## Towards Socialist Childcare

by the Socialist Childcare Collective  
15p, 16pp, from Rising Free  
Outlines the structure and methods of care for the under fives in Cuba and China. In both these countries the aims of education are explicit and go beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge. They are geared towards moulding kids for their role in a socialist society. From an early age collective work, non-competitive relationships and sexual equality are emphasised. From this follows a way of looking at childhood that is very different from ours: children are a group of people with a responsible part to play in society and as such are treated with respect.

In contrast the single explicit aim of British education is to develop intellectual ability. But with this go many implicit aims such as the learning of authority relations, competitiveness and sex role stereo-

typing. Though it is impossible to realise socialist aims in childcare fully in a non-socialist society, we can at least make our goals and values explicitly socialist in this area. The pamphlet concludes with a list of practical suggestions for what we can do as "part of a radical attempt to change the quality of life here and now".

Wisty Hoyland

## Science for People

Women's Collective Issue

No 29, 25p

"Male interviewer to female candidate for industrial sponsorship: 'We didn't intend to consider you for sponsorship, we only invited you to interview so that we could see what a woman who wanted to be an engineer looked like'."

the sections under which you can be forcibly held, how to resist, how to escape. It also lists groups (all in London) and books (all by men).

Cope, 15 Acklam Road, London W10 (top floor), 01-969 9790. Open Mon-Fri, 11-8. Emergency phone Sat 969 9790, Sun 969 6696 or 743 0737. They also run encounter groups and one short-stay house.

Lynne Segal

## Women and Education

The newsletter has moved to 63 Clyde Road, West Didsbury, Manchester 20. Copies 12p each; subscription 35p for three issues, 20p to students, unemployed and women wageless at home. The latest issue (no 6) has articles on pre-school, women and science, abortion and free schools.



## Can You Cope?

One woman in six and one man in nine spends some time in mental hospital. At any one time last year there were about 100,000 people in mental hospital, and thousands seeking psychiatric help.

Cope is a group of people worried about what happens to those who end up in "the bin". Few get any therapeutic help at all. Most are simply drugged and tranquillised (60,000,000 scripts of tranquillisers are dishied out annually). Any therapy they do get is likely to be the sort that "patches them up" to return to the jobs and home situations which landed them there in the first place.

Real therapy doesn't just patch people up. It involves working collectively on the social and political problems that started the emotional stress. These problems can't be sorted out if people are isolated in mental hospitals.

Cope tries to find out what happens in mental hospitals, and to publicise alternative forms of emotional support. The latest issue of its publication *Heavy Daze* (no 5, 15p, available from Cope) has articles on dealing with suicide attempts, organising group therapy, and co-counselling.

Cope has also produced a pamphlet, *How To Cope With The Mental Health Act 1959 - A Practical Survival Manual* (EPOC pamphlet no 1; free to mental patients, 20p to others except 30p to social workers and 50p to psychiatrists). It outlines

## The Pill off Prescription

Michael Smith and Penny Kane  
Birth Control Trust, 50p, 16pp

This expensive and controversial pamphlet proposes that "the distribution of oral contraceptives in the UK should be delegated to nurses, midwives and health visitors, under the responsibility of a doctor to whom they can refer problem cases". On the grounds that (1) the Pill is pretty safe (debatable! see *Spare Rib* 32), and women who have been scared off it might be reassured if distribution were simplified; (2) it's impossible to tell in advance who will suffer side-effects, so this would be no more dangerous than distribution through doctors; (3) signing prescriptions is a waste of doctors' "special skills and expensive time".

## Sex, Race and Class

Selma James

30p, 34pp, from Falling Wall Press, 79 Richmond Road, Montpelier, Bristol

"If sex and race are pulled away from class, virtually all that remains is the truncated, provincial, sectarian politics of the white, male metropolitan left." Selma James of the Power of Women Collective argues that the working class should be redefined to encompass women and non-whites. She sees the international division of labour as a power relationship within the working class, a hierarchy with a scale of wages to correspond. So she sees women's wagelessness as the basis of their oppression.

With an introduction by women in the black movement, and a good discussion published in *Race Today*, where the article first appeared.

## Alternative Press Digest

No 3, 25p, 78pp

Alternative political reprints, mainly from England and USA. Good pictures and coloured pages. Includes Lynne Segal on Australian building labourers (*Red Rag* 7). Available – plus 8p postage – from 22 Dane Road, Margate, Kent CT9 2AA.

## Some Facts About Contraception and Abortion

5p, 8pp.

Produced by a group of women working with young people in South London. Gives details of the different methods, with comments. A bit glib in places – eg "It is not painful to have the IUD inserted" – but straightforward and accessible. Available from Liz Dibb, 102 Cleveland Gardens, London SW13 (01-876 3710).

## Sheffield Newsletter

Available from 53a Commonsides, Sheffield 6, Yorks. for 10p plus postage. Few copies of June issue still left.

## Breakout: Prison Poems

Pat Arrowsmith

30p, 24pp.

Written during her two most recent sentences under the Incitement to Disaffection Act. With the drawings in *Spare Rib* 33 and some others. Published by the Edinburgh University Student Publication Board.

## \* Change of address

Women's Report

2 Sherriff Court  
Sherriff Road  
London NW6

25p including postage





# RAPE

editorial

Rape is usually a premeditated crime, an attack on women, an attack which involves humiliation of the victim and not just "relief from sexual frustration", as is sometimes suggested. It includes spitting, urination, beating — as does wife-battering, and of course battered wives too are forced into intercourse by their husbands (you cannot rape your wife).

The recent Law Lords ruling made rape "news" again, and has been dealt with by most of the media as an academic debate about consent/non-consent. The laws operate in practice not so much to protect women as to protect men, on the assumption that women are hysterical or vindictive liars. A policewoman we discussed this with said that in her experience of more than 100 cases of rape, only three or four were not genuine, and these four were very young girls who didn't understand the definition of rape.

This legal squabble will stop even more women talking about their rape, fearing the notoriety and futility of exposure to the courts. Without help a rape victim can become completely isolated — we've heard of women unable to go out for months on end — and self-hating — why me? what about me made it happen? She may feel dirty and disembodied, unable to bear the thought of anyone touching her. Rape Crisis Centres in the States often receive their first calls from women raped 20 years before and still desperately in need of help.

Very little is known about rape in general. The reporting rate is low (in the States it is estimated that only 5% to 25% of all cases are reported). We know about the long-term effects of rape, and the way victims are treated by the police, doctors and lawyers only from individual experience.

Recently a group of women has formed in London to study rape. We have been trying to work out what rape means in this society, and how we can begin to combat it. We are now doing some basic research. If you have ever been raped, you could help by filling in a confidential questionnaire, available from the address below. If you come into contact with rape victims in a legal-medical-police capacity, you could help us build up a picture of current practice and how it could be improved.

Eventually we hope to run an emergency phone-in service, and to be able to provide medical and legal advice for rape victims. We would also hope to provide emotional support, and self-help counselling — that is, we plan to function rather like an American Rape Crisis Centre. We are teaching ourselves counselling techniques, and any woman is welcome to join us.

We will be able to put rape victims who feel the need to do so in touch with other women who have had the same experience, so that together as a group they can work through the fear, the humiliation and the anger, and re-think relationships with men.

We also need to examine the present laws, and press for change. We should urge that the implications of rape be included in sex education programmes for both boys and girls, and develop a critique of the way the media present rape and the effects in a male-dominated society. It is an urgent priority for the women's movement. □

*The Rape Counselling and Research Centre  
66 York Way  
London N1*





# 'They call us militants'

## Woman sit in at Crosfield's, London

by Lynne Segal and Alison Fell

Islington Gazette Sept 1974

### Employees to keep their jobs

THE 850 staff employed at the Holloway Road branch of Crosfield Electronics have been assured that their futures are secure following the company's merger with a rival group.

Crosfield's has been merged with De La Rue Company and a new board has been formed.

Sir Arthur Norman of De La Rue has been appointed chairman and Mr John F. Crosfield is the deputy chairman and chief executive. Mr Crosfield has also joined the main board of De La Rue.

Sir Arthur Norman, making his first visit to Crosfield, following the merger was able to meet senior manager and union officials.

In an address to both groups, he reconfirmed a previous statement that "no needless changes would be made to the management structure of Crosfield and its subsidiaries as a result of the merger." He continued: "The merger is a two-way stretch with both companies benefit-



At clocking out time on March 6, 300 workers at Crosfields Electronics factory in Archway were told they were to be laid off as from that moment. Some, thinking there was no alternative, accepted the redundancy money. Others, however, decided not to take this kind of treatment and occupied part of the factory on March 26. They began a sit-in which they kept up, 24 hours a day, for the next two months.

Crosfields Electronics was taken over by the De La Rue Company last September. The workers were assured there would be no redundancies (see insert). Meanwhile De La Rue was planning to concentrate electronics production in its Westward factory in Peterborough. It now seems likely that the 300 redundancies might be only the first step in a gradual shutdown of De La Rue's London workings.

These are far from the first jobs in North London lost in this way. 30,000 jobs, for instance, were lost in Islington alone between 1966 and 1971. With government subsidies offered to firms which move to development areas outside, there has been an enormous flight of industrial capital from London. At the moment there are no major developments in manufacturing in London, and no plans for any. Those who lose skilled industrial jobs are unlikely to find new ones, and most probably would have to seek lower paid work in the service industries. Employers can usually seek out some new land flowing with milk, honey and investment returns; workers don't have the same choices. Some, like those at Crosfields, decide to dig in and fight for their interests. The May issue of the *Economist* points out that the 1974-5 slump has not, so far, produced the unemployment levels of the 1971-2 slump "Because it now costs more to make labour redundant, and unions resist with sit-ins."

Twelve women were involved in the Crosfields occupation. Their struggle is yet another instance of the widespread mobilisation of women in recent industrial militancy. Despite the publicity given

to women mobilising against strikes, at Cowley, and now at Chrysler, the true story of women's recent involvement in industrial protest is very different. In the last few years there has been a great upsurge of women's struggles at work, in places where they have never been militant before; for many different gains. The following are only a few of these.

In the last year, women fought for equal pay at SEI, Manchester (see *Spare Rib* Issue 35). They challenged closures and redundancies at Lucas, Birmingham, Imperial Typewriters in Leicester. Women fought for union recognition at SEIKO in Kilburn, and Chelsea Quilts in Devon. The nurses and other women in the public sector are fighting for wage increases. At Armstrong Patents in Yorkshire they mobilised against the three-day-week, and at Bonar Long, Dundee, they fought redeployment to different work.

And of course women have organised to defend men's struggles at work — wives of Triumph Meriden workers formed action groups to back the sit-in, and organise getting Social Security. At British Leyland in Cowley, wives and women workers quashed an attempt to set up a 'Housewives' Association' which would have opposed the transport workers' strike.

**We asked some of the women occupying Crosfields about their fight:**

*How many women worked here?*

About 90, in the whole factory.

*How many are here now?*

There's only about 12 of us fighting it. Occupying.

*What were your exact jobs?*

We were classed as wirewomen — wiring is when you use a soldering iron and make up chassis.

*Have many of the other women been able to get jobs?*

No, there's very few of them working. I meet them outside walking around.

*The ones who have got work, where have they got it?*



They've not got it in wiring, there's nothing like that left in London, you have to go away outside.

*Are you all from Islington?*

— Well, I'm from Islington, most are Islington or area.

— One woman who left's working in a cafe round the corner. She was a deputy supervisor — wages must have been £75 a week. She's lucky if she's getting £30 now. I wouldn't let the governors see me come down in the world like that.

— Some are working in the hospitals and taking home less than £20. Some are charwomen.

*Have any of the women moved to Peterborough?*

— No, there were only about ten out of 300 offered jobs in Peterborough. That was a lot of rubbish, them saying it.

— Really they just weren't interested, they just wanted to get rid of all this building.

*You'd had a few fights here to get your wages up before the occupation, hadn't you?*

We had good money here because we had a good union and they fought and got us good rates. I think we were the best paid factory for this area round here. And listen, we'd have been up to equal pay in April, because that's when it was to start from. But you see they have got us out, they gave us redundancy in March.

*When you first had notice of redundancy, what did you feel?*

— Oh, it was terrible, terrible. That's the reason why a lot of the women went, you know, they were getting harrassed, they were getting a bit pressurised to get out.

— I think there was a lot of confusion because you must remember this came right out of the blue, nobody was expecting it.

— At the end of the day, they got you into a meeting and then they sent the line managers to tell the workers they were going to be redundant because the factory was closing down. It was shocking. People cried.

*Did you spend a long time casting round to think what to do?*

— There was no time — it was late on when we were told, everyone was clearing the shop. There was a bit of bribery if you went straight away.

— I believe a lot of the managers were getting bonuses to get the shop cleared quickly.

*Did any of you have families who reckoned you shouldn't fight it, that it was a losing battle?*

No — my husband asked me two questions: 'Had you a good job there?' I said I had a smashing job. He said, 'Were you happy?' I said I was happy in that job. He said, 'Then it's worth fighting for. So get back there.'

*What about problems with kids and childminding now?*

— My children are at school.

— Mine are grown up.

— Those with younger children used to pay to have them minded, it used to come from the woman's wage. Now they can't afford it. They find it hard to get down here and hard to manage.

*When some of you decided to stay and fight, did you feel isolated?*

— No. It doesn't worry us. They call us things. 'Militants.'

— They were traitors to walk away, those who left. Because we all voted not to accept redundancies.

*Do you get criticised by neighbours and friends?*

— Yes, I was called a militant.

— No, my personal friends say 'I agree with you.'

*What about the women who left?*

I don't see them. Even if I see them, love, I don't speak to them, I hold my head up high.

*Some women must be really pleased you're fighting, thinking about their own jobs?*

Aye, I think it's good. I feel happy fighting it. I think I would have been miserable if I'd walked away with my tail between my legs.

*How long do you think you can hold out for?*

— Don't know. If it takes a year, a year and a half.

— You see, if you don't fight to stop them taking the jobs out of London, they keep doing it. So you have to do something to draw the line somewhere.

*What are you surviving on economically?*

— The union is giving us some. £5.

— When donations come round he gives us some money.

*Why can't you get the rest made up by Social Security?*

— See, you can't — before you get redundancy money you must lodge your cards with the Labour Exchange. The governors have put the stop around — even the married men can't get any for their wives and children.

— Crosfields slipped the word down to the SS offices. So to anyone who comes along they say you must lodge your cards, you've got to

take your redundancy slips to show that you've accepted redundancy — so that would mean your fight was finished.

*How do you manage on £5 a week?*

— When I was working I saved. We just have to use our savings.

— We have to cut down too.

*Do you think you've got stronger and more confident as women since you've been occupying?*

— See, I wear trousers to work now. I feel I'm one of the boys now.

— Aye, we're all pals now. We've got a great friendship, that we never had when we were working, with the women and the fellows. We never spoke to anyone much before, just saw them.

*How do you think this affects your husbands?*

My husband says he saw more of me when I was working, because we come here evenings now.

*Who makes the tea and the meals?*

— The women all do a bit. The women have been doing most of the cooking though. We're always washing dishes and cleaning up.

— We've tried to get the men to do it too. [During the occupation a large notice appeared on the wall, stating: 'If you have some very good reason for not washing your cup, you may leave it here.']

*What do you see as exactly what you're fighting for?*

— Our jobs back. If I wanted redundancy money I'd have walked away at the beginning. We all want our jobs back, there's plenty of work — I was in the middle of a job.

— I think it's better to have your job than to be on the dole.

*Will you all stay as long as the occupation lasts?*

— Yes, we can't back out now.

— We must stay till the end.

— And just think how these governors have been dirty, in a lot of ways. They've probably blacked us.

*What will you do if you finally get defeated?*

— We don't think of defeat, we're hoping to win.

— We're talking about a victory party — I'm going to buy a new dress for that. Why not, I'm no defeatist.

— One man says to me why don't you take your money and go? But we're hoping to win.

The day we photographed the women — on a mass picket at Crosfields on Tuesday May 13 — was the day De La Rue were finally granted a possession order in court, which meant that the workers in occupation were at last to be exposed to the full force of eviction squads, bailiffs, and police. De La Rue used the added leverage of threatening to sub-contract out its sheet metal production, laying off more Crosfields workers. After long negotiations, shop stewards finally put it to a factory meeting that morning, that the seven reinstatements and the increased redundancy pay offer they had wrung out of the management should be accepted. The vote carried it. We went back to find out what the women felt.

— They agreed to take seven, all together, back — one wireman, an electrical inspector, one labourer, two wirewomen, a plumber.

*What about the new redundancy offer?*

An extra £175 for every year worked. It's all right for the people who've been here 10 or 15 years, not the others.

*How do you feel about it all?*

— It's sad, we could cry.

— We're all sad, because there are people who fought who won't be getting any vacancies. The convenor's not getting reinstated. It wasn't money we were fighting for, it was our jobs.

*Do you think it's all been worthwhile?*

— Yes! We put up a good fight. We nearly bankrupted him!

— We occupied this building for eight weeks — tell me how many could do that?

*Do you think you'll be out of work for a long time?*

— Yes.

— I'll try one of these government re-training things for redundant women. Huh! Fourteen pounds a week.

*Will you see each other again?*

Of course we will. We've got all the names and addresses.

So, this time, the sheer economic power of De La Rue robbed the workers of what security they had won — they lost the fight for their jobs. Despite support from other sections of the factory and from the Labour movement locally, the odds were still completely unequal: De La Rue's cynicism in all these doings was bulwarked by the profits and power of its status as a multi-national combine, and by the laws of the land. The workers were negotiating merely with their whole lives and futures.□



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# 'To Lose a Breast Seemed More Terrible than Dying'

*Lin Layram describes her experience of breast cancer*

When I finally made up my mind to leave my husband after a ten year relationship I was twenty eight and childless. Within a few months I was beginning to adjust optimistically to a new kind of life. I began a stable and interesting relationship with the man I now live with and for the first time experienced that a sexual relationship was a possible source of happiness. The hang-ups I had built up over years began to get resolved. For the first time I began to feel a pleasure and excitement from my own body that was not tied up with guilt. At this point in my life I discovered that I had cancer of the breast, and the breast had to be amputated (a simple mastectomy). The feelings I experienced are obviously a result of my personal situation, but may strike a chord for other women in the same situation, so I am recording what happened to me in as much detail as possible. I hope that it may help other women to be relieved of some of the unnecessary hurt and humiliation which I felt at the time.

It was my boyfriend who first noticed the lump in my left breast. He persuaded me to visit a doctor which I did, albeit reluctantly. I did not however really believe at this stage that much serious could be wrong 'since I assumed (an assumption apparently shared by some of the medical profession) that breast cancer is a disease of middle age.<sup>\*</sup> The local, male GP was reassuring. He examined my breasts, said that it was a swollen gland common among women taking the pill (which I had been on for seven years) and told me not to worry. He did not refer me to a hospital for tests but did mention in passing that I should call in again if the lump didn't

disappear. Over the next weeks I was relieved to find that the lump did seem to reduce in size. Looking back, I wonder how much of this was wishful thinking and imagination — difficult to tell with a lump that size — contained within a breast duct above the nipple and probably no bigger than a pea. Shortly after this visit to the GP I moved house and didn't have any official doctor for around four months. It didn't seem necessary as although I was often tired and suffered badly from headaches I had no definite symptoms of distress or illness.

After this period my boyfriend and I moved back to North London. I made a routine visit to the F.P.A. clinic to collect my contraceptive pills. At my visit I mentioned to the doctor, that I had a small lump in the breast. She did not seem keen to examine me but finally, agreed to look at it as it was time for an annual check-up anyway. After examining both breasts she said that she had found nothing. Feeling over-anxious and fussy I began to question her further. She replied by reassuring me that if I had a "cyst" she wouldn't be giving me the pill. As she said this she signed me up for a six month supply.

I should say that I am now "contraindicated" as regards the pill. The hormones have a very bad effect on accelerating cancer of the breast.

As I stood in the queue to collect supplies I decided to take out my treatment card and see what the doctor had written. To my bewilderment I read the words "Nodule in left breast". I still find this incident inexplicable. The clinic doctor should have informed me, told me to contact my doctor at once and have ceased to supply the pill. She did none of these

things. I couldn't face going back in to confront her so I collected the pills and went home feeling very shocked and puzzled. I picked up a leaflet as I went out which proclaimed "Don't gamble with breast cancer!". The leaflet informed me that early treatment was essential and that anyone finding a lump should see a doctor immediately. The doctor had perhaps not read this leaflet! In my experience it was the doctors who "gambled", not me.

When I look back on these incidents I feel furious with myself for my spinelessness. Yet if the doctors would not take the lump in my breast seriously it was a great temptation for me to take their reassurances at face value. What woman does not dread that a lump will turn out to be cancer and that she will lose her breast and with it her sexual identity. These

deeply repressed fears prevented me from fighting the apathy I encountered as I should if I were fighting for a sister in the same situation. I think this may be an important point in helping other women get treatment fast — to recognise the reluctance to fight an issue like this.

Diagnosis of breast cancer in my experience cannot be made by your average or even better than average clinic doctor or GP. It can only be confirmed by a biopsy report and women should insist on this as soon as possible — or other women should insist on their sisters behalf.

It would seem to me that because of my age the doctors I saw discounted as statistically improbable the diagnosis of cancer and therefore did not even bother to investigate further, even though a woman's life was at stake.



A month or two after the clinic incident my breast began to actually hurt and throb (probably as an effect of the hormones in the pill which I was still innocently swallowing down every day?). I had to hold my breast tightly in order to relieve the pain and in this state I felt compelled to again visit a doctor. My new GP actually took me seriously as I apologetically repeated my litany and after an examination she referred me to a consultant at the local hospital.

As it was Christmas an appointment couldn't be made until January 1st. At a party during that period I got drunk and broke down sobbing, and hysterical with anxiety. Only at that point did I realise how my underlying fears were being repressed and how depressed all the fore-going experiences were making me.

On January 1st the specialist examined me in Out Patients. I was also examined (without my permission being asked) by a male medical student. I was told I had a small cyst and that it would be wise to remove it. This could be done in three days in hospital. I was studying at the time so arranged my admission for a fortnight hence. I left feeling relieved. Everyone in my house was happy for me that things would soon be sorted out. My boyfriend was loving and supportive but I became depressed over the next week. I was feeling tired and ill and finally went down with gastric flu. I still went into hospital on the admission date of January 19th as my GP was afraid I would lose my place in the queue if I didn't. I stayed in the hospital for three days but was not operated on after all because the anaesthetist said I was too weak from the flu to work on. They sent me home and re-admitted me again the following week. I was diagnosed as having fibrosis (thickening of the fibrous tissue). During the few days that followed I was upset that the lump which was extremely tender and painful was continually handled by long queues of male medical students and housemen. Never was my permission sought and I experienced for the first time what it is like to lie and be an object while jokes are made over your head, and remarks exchanged between consultant and respectful housemen, which do not include the patient as a feeling human being. (Incidentally, Our Bodies Ourselves argues that potentially cancerous growths should be handled

as little as possible).

The operation was fairly untraumatic although I was at the end of the queue and the pre-med had worn off by the time I got into the theatre. The lump was excised and a biopsy done. The stitches were neatly sewn around the nipple so as to reduce the scar. During this period I met women in the ward who were cancer and mastectomy patients. I was struck by their courage, their ability to make jokes. I was also shocked by the sight of one woman waiting for her wound to be dressed after a radical mastectomy and looking to me like a hot cross bun. To me to lose a breast seemed a thing more terrible than dying. Amputation of any kind had always filled me with pity and disgust. The last day I was in the ward the Australian houseman, shouted across the ward loudly as I chatted quietly by someone's bed. His words caused a pit in my stomach. He said "It looked pretty bad for you, but path. lab. (pathology department) says it's OK — you can go home today". At that moment I had a glimpse into the future and was flooded by unspoken fears. However I pushed down what he had said back into the deepest layers of my unconscious and "forgot" it.

I was discharged that day and returned three days later to have the stitches taken out (as an out-patient). The nurse was gentle and didn't hurt me at all. She and I were both pleased at the neatness of the stitches which ensured that no scar would spoil my beauty! I went home and took up life as usual. I remember that I even scrubbed the kitchen floor that day. I didn't feel too great. My arm was aching but I was so relieved to be home and to be in a warm bed with my boyfriend again after the chilly isolation of hospital.

The next day we invited some friends round for a meal to celebrate my triumphant return. I cooked chicken and pineapple I remember and I was just about to take it in to serve it when a knock came on the door. To my indescribable shock I found my husband standing there. (I hadn't seen him for almost a year). He told me that the hospital had rung him, and asked him to take me there the following morning. The biopsy report had been "wrong". (Needless to say when I went into the hospital I had filled in all my details in triplicate, was accompanied by my boyfriend etc — The administration had got bold of my old admission card and rung a number

eighteen months out of date). I burst into tears, I got rid of him, shut the door, went back upstairs and somehow in a daze we served and ate the meal I'd prepared. The night was endless. I lay in my boyfriend's arms and cried. We tried to comfort each other but it was difficult. In the morning we got up and went together to the hospital.

When we arrived the sister of the ward was expecting us and we were hurried into a private ward off the main ward where she explained that there was a "mistake" and they now "wanted to take a bit more tissue away". Several kind and sympathetic nurses came in and out during the next thirty minutes or so as we waited for the consultant to make his round, bringing paper handkerchiefs to mop up my tears, coffee and tranquillisers. I was totally unable to talk or communicate with anybody. I felt only that I was in a nightmare, perhaps under an anaesthetic still in the first operation and soon someone would wake me up and it would all be unreal. (I still have this feeling occasionally and I have to touch myself to check that my breast really isn't there anymore). As we waited I stared out over a filthy courtyard with a fire escape thinking how it symbolised everything about our society. I felt trapped. I wanted to run from the hospital. I drew on the dirty pane of the window with my finger "This is the way the world ends — not with a bang but a whimper". The great man finally arrived. It seemed hours that we had waited in silence though it was probably only a short time. What followed was the most terrible, endless minutes of my life.

I'll just report it as it felt. My boyfriend was sent out of the room (Why?) and I was left with the sister although my memory is that I was alone. Perhaps this is because I felt alone. The consultant had with him around eight white-coated male acolytes. The room seemed to be filled with them. I sat sobbing uncontrollably as he told me he would like to amputate the breast and give me a "normal life". I could have an "appliance" he told me that there was no other form of treatment. All that I was aware of during this speech was my complete humiliation as a woman under those seemingly dispassionate many pairs of masculine eyes seeing me as "woman, twenty eight, carcinogenic", disassociating me from their reactions to women as people, or ▶



even women as desirable, warm and human. After the speech was over I stuttered out between sobs that I would not have the operation as I could not bear to be mutilated in that way. He did not argue much but told me that he hoped I would change my mind. Outside the door the Australian houseman (who presumably was responsible for what had happened since he gave me the wrong biopsy report) said to the ward sister "Why do you British women make such a fuss about a non-functional organ. Women don't behave like that in Australia".

Needless to say I was persuaded by the nurses, the sister and the other women in the ward to think again and I went into the operating theatre again as the first patient the following morning. I was offered a private ward but chose to go back into the public ward as I valued the support and companionship of other women. The nursing staff helped me a great deal by their sympathy, and by letting me "talk it out" over several days. The male doctors were brisk and impersonal. There was no psychological follow up on a formal level whatever, either after the operation or on discharge. I find the period around the actual operation difficult to remember. I was very heavily drugged for days afterwards until I asked them to reduce the dose as I felt tired and muddled all the time. I was only in hospital for ten days during which time the stitches were removed, and a bottle taken away which had drained off excess fluid. I didn't suffer any loss of arm functions, just a little stiffness. I felt quite weak for a few weeks (not surprising having had two anaesthetics in such a short period). The psychological effects are much more difficult to cope with and still persist to a greater or lesser extent.

It is very hard to be a woman with a scar instead of a breast in a society where everywhere you look there are pictures of idealised, beautiful and well developed bodies. It is very hard not to feel put down and ugly and undesirable. I am very lucky in that I have a loving relationship but even so I found it difficult to adjust and to feel relaxed again without clothes on even when alone. I still feel uneasily that somehow it is a punishment for my sexuality and pride in my body in that period before the operation — that short guilt-free interlude. The prosthesis (false breast) provided on

the NHS is relatively good — air and fluid filled plastic; (some hospitals still don't provide these — Northampton Hospital for example gives out such antiquated old-type prostheses that women buy their own, if they can afford it). I received no follow-up advice on the NHS other than a physical check-up every three months and examination for secondary growths. I found out where to buy special swimwear (made by a mastectomy patient) by reading the Sunday Times. Since I had the operation I have given birth to a daughter after a normal pregnancy. In spite of the fact that I couldn't breast feed, and they knew why, health visitors, relaxation instructors were all pleased to point out the disadvantages of bottle feeding — including the prevalence of cot deaths. Etc.

I would therefore end this article by commenting that the lack of concern for and sensitivity towards women in this situation is a result of the hierarchical and male dominated structure of medicine. Not only the physical mutilation but the fear of death is something that has to be learnt to be lived with and perhaps groups could be set up for women to support each other in this respect by talking these fears out. The psychological aspect needs a great deal of research particularly in regard to the seeming prevalence of the development of breast cancer after periods of great mental stress. It may be coincidence that three women I know contracted breast cancer after the break up of a marriage, and emotional crisis may play some as yet unknown part in acting as a trigger mechanism in the break-down of immunological defences. This was suggested to me by a sympathetic male registrar at the Whittington.

Much is said about the importance of educating women to seek advice early. I would say from my experience that the medical profession also needs education in this respect and should be discouraged from making dangerous assumptions on the grounds of generalised probabilities. Improving the standard of aftercare is a priority. Mastectomy patients unite — we have nothing to lose but our fears! □

☆ Most breast cancers appear after 40, but something like 18% of cases are in women under 45

☆ Doctors are required to ask permission and you have the right — if you dare — to refuse.

# The Diagnosis, Treatment and Aftercare of

Jill Rakusen

Understandably, we are fearful about cancer. In spite of much time and energy by cancer education bodies, even doctors are as likely as we are to delay before seeking help and advice about their own symptoms. Powerful taboos prevent us from talking about our fears, sharing our experiences, and learning to cope with the realities of life — and death. Lin's account is the beginning of the breaking-down of such taboos.

We cannot break down taboos without knowledge. In this article I have attempted to come to grips with some of the facts surrounding breast cancer and its treatment. (I must stress at this point that the following is a necessarily brief survey; for it to be otherwise would entail writing a book). It involved much reading and talking, and asking lots of questions which often resulted in conflicting answers and the need to ask yet more questions. In fact, there are very few answers: this is a complex subject and much is not known or understood. In many areas the medical profession is doing little more than grope around in the dark, and in some areas that darkness will inevitably turn out to be a blind alley.

## Treatment

So far, the possibilities in orthodox medicine are as follows:—

removal of the lump alone (lumpectomy)  
removal of the breast alone (simple mastectomy)  
removal of the breast and some lymph nodes under the arm (modified radical mastectomy)  
removal of the breast, chest wall muscles beneath it — which is much more deforming than the above — and the lymph nodes (radical)

Together with each of the above operations, drug therapy or radiotherapy may be given.

Five years ago, 90% of women were given radicals, in spite of evidence published in the 1960s that they were not necessarily more effective and were, in some cases less so. I talked to several people about the situation in Britain. Dr. Charles Gilliss, director of the Cancer Intelligence unit for the West of Scotland, thought that most surgeons were tending towards 'conservative' surgery (ie conserving as much as possible), and this is borne out by the experience of Betty Westgate of the Mastectomy Association. Graham Bennette of the British Cancer Council could not think of anyone who would recommend a 'Halsted' radical nowadays; the more deforming and disabling radical operations as done in the USA were scarcely ever done here. Radical operations were recently performed on Betty Ford and Happy Rockefeller: they emerged from their operations smiling, waving their arms above their heads, and this in no small way accounts for the fact that breast clinics in Britain as well as the USA became inundated with women coming forward for tests and



# Breast Cancer

treatment. The clinics are still snowed under.

While radical operations of some description are still performed, simple mastectomies are the most usual operations, according to one professor of oncology specialising in breast cancer. Work is going on with even smaller operations, but he feels there are very real pros and cons attached to lumpectomies. In a small proportion of women, the breast can be saved; the stage, kind and place of tumour are all crucial (lumpectomies are more feasible if the tumour is not in the outer part of the breast, and of course only feasible if diagnosis is made early). One difficulty at present is deciding when lumpectomies are possible; it is much easier to tell when they are *not* possible.

Difficulties are compounded by the problems attached to accurate diagnosis. For instance, there is some degree of difficulty attached to diagnosing whether or not the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes; such knowledge is crucial if 'conservative' treatment is envisaged. One can also find that different parts of a tumour are in different stages of development. Furthermore, not all pathologists agree on whether certain cell conditions are cancer or not. It seems that in the USA they are more liberal with the term; in fact, one has to continually bear in mind that 'cancer' in one country might not be the same disease as 'cancer' in another country. Obviously, a lumpectomy can only be considered if there is no doubt about diagnosis and all other relevant factors.

## Diagnosis

You've probably guessed that diagnostic difficulties can lead to mistakes: pathologists could diagnose as cancer, border-line cases or cases where they were uncertain, in order to protect themselves from giving a false negative diagnosis. Unnecessary mastectomies do occur, particularly with difficult diagnoses, although it is obviously difficult to establish exactly how common such mistakes are. The risk of such mistakes occurring can of course be minimised. For example, in some places it is standard practice for a 'frozen' biopsy to be done, taken to the laboratory and diagnosed while the woman is still under the anaesthetic, and further surgery is then carried out if the decision is 'positive'. In this situation, the pathologist is under pressure to make a quick decision while the woman remains unconscious. If there is no such pressure, the pathologist can make a less hasty decision with the possibility of doing more tests, and surgery can then be carried out a few days later, if need be. The wait of a few days makes absolutely no difference in terms of safety, although it is more demanding on NHS resources in terms of time and staff.

Readers might have heard of office biopsies which do not require a general anaesthetic. Ellen Frankfort (author of *Vaginal Politics*)

recently wrote in *Viva* magazine that she would choose to have one of these in preference to the possibility of error associated with a frozen biopsy as described above. However, office, or needle biopsies are only suitable in some cases otherwise they, too, can result in mis-diagnosis — this time, in the form of a false *negative*.

## Hospitals

Besides surgeons, there are other specialists involved in the treatment of cancer, such as chemotherapists or radiotherapists. Ideally, decisions about the best way to treat a particular case should be made on the basis of joint discussion between all the relevant specialists, including the pathologist. However, this is by no means the general rule. In some hospitals, particularly the smaller ones, the surgeon may reign supreme, with the power to decide whether or not even to *refer* to a specialist from another discipline. As Betty Westgate agrees, it is best to go to the bigger hospitals with all the facilities.

However, some of the bigger hospitals are better than others. Dr. Gilliss believes strongly that biologically active drugs should be used with early cases of breast cancer and not just with the more advanced cases. He feels that at the early stage of the disease the drugs are probably at their most effective. It is not the rule for these cytotoxic drugs to be used with early cases for two reasons. Firstly, their efficacy in these cases has not been proved conclusively and secondly, experienced people are required in order to minimise the side effects of the drugs. Only centres with the capacity and above all, the time, are able to do this. In Dr. Gilliss' view, the evidence is becoming increasingly strong, both in terms of survival and its quality, that this kind of chemotherapy should begin right at the start of treatment.

To sum up: There is of course much debate and research going on about treatment for breast cancer. As far as surgery is concerned, although figures now seem to show that less radical treatment is at least as effective in most cases, radical mastectomies do have their proponents, even in Britain. As far as accompanying treatment is concerned, this can range from hormone treatment (including possible removal of the ovaries), drugs to stimulate the body's defence mechanisms against the disease, drugs which kill off cells, and of course, radiotherapy. Unfortunately, lack of space prevents me from examining these additional forms of therapy. However, whatever is most suitable depends on a variety of factors; the kind of, stage of and place of the tumour, the age of the individual woman (particularly whether she is of child-bearing age or past the menopause), and above all, the expertise of the technicians involved, their ability to treat each woman as an individual, and the

resources available in the particular hospital. Some doctors, as an American surgeon has remarked, don't treat women, they treat themselves. In other words, they want to be able to feel that they have done everything they could for the patient — 'doing' being the operative word. Hence, the kinds of block-buster, major treatment programmes used especially in the USA, (eg maximum surgery, maximum chemotherapy, maximum radiotherapy). Therefore if women are faced with breast cancer and want to know what the possibilities are, it is imperative that we should be in a position to ask for the objective opinions of at least two doctors with no particular axes to grind. It would be ideal to attend a hospital with all the possible facilities and where all the relevant specialists are on an equal footing. Information can be obtained from such agencies as the Regional Cancer Organisations or the British Cancer Council (see addresses).

## Aftercare

That there are emotional and psychological problems attached to the removal of a breast or breasts is obvious. Lin writes about these at length from her own experience. Because I have had no personal experience I can only attempt to show what help is possible or available in the hope that women can make sure it is available in their areas.

*False breasts (protheses):* whilst most women will feel the need to wear false breasts, it is possible of course not to wear one, and some women do feel happier without. However, strains can develop, particularly in the back, if the remaining breast is not balanced with a similarly weighted prosthesis.

I am assured by at least one professor that the most comfortable prostheses and bras are available on the NHS. But in some cases — perhaps many? — women have been fobbed off with less than adequate help. For instance the *Sun* reports an example of a woman who, because she was over 50, was considered 'too old' for a life-like prosthesis and was expected to make do with the cheapest kind — a bag of plastic granules. Another, much younger woman reports that she doesn't wear a prosthesis because it sticks up at the top — 'I just pad myself with cotton wool'. Her reasons for never going swimming any more seem to be attached to her unsatisfactory prosthesis. There are many kinds of prosthesis, all available on the NHS. The consultant is required to prescribe them by name. It is difficult to believe how a consultant can prescribe without first finding out which a woman would be happiest with, so ideally we should be able to examine all the possibilities first. The best prosthesis is gel-filled with a smooth silicone skin which clings to the chest wall and assumes the body's temperature, making it feel like a natural part of the body. It can be washed as often as desired, is not liable to leakage, and ▶



lasts indefinitely. This one costs the NHS between £20 and £35 depending on size, compared with a maximum of £12 for the others. However, it does not tend to be prescribed unless the surgeon thinks it is the only correct type for you. The next best thing is a liquid-filled prosthesis which, although it is very life-like, has to be replaced annually and is liable to leakage. As the gel-filled prosthesis lasts indefinitely, it is difficult to see how economics should prevent it from being generally available on the NHS.

**Bras:** the Mastectomy Association reports that for most women the bra previously used will still be suitable, with pockets and/or crossed ribbons sewn in to hold the prosthesis in place. However, as ordinary bras aren't designed to take the weight of a false breast, this can lead to problems such as backache. In which case the grounds for obtaining specially designed bras on the NHS are obvious. After all, the NHS does in certain circumstances provide for such things as wigs, and they are far more expensive.

**Breast reconstruction:** George Watts of Birmingham General Hospital writes that since it has been learnt that they are prepared to reconstruct the breast after mastectomy, even with a new nipple, women have been coming forward for treatment much earlier. Half the women who leave the Birmingham hospital after mastectomy leave with a new breast implanted under the skin, although it is only possible if the growth is caught early and there is no chance of recurrence. Implants can also be done years

after the original operation. So far, Birmingham reports no snags or troublesome side-effects (they first started doing this fifteen years ago) but some doctors do not support it and there are not many places that do it. One objection is that it has not yet been properly evaluated, which means that the time to observe women over a normal life-span has not yet elapsed.

## Support and Counselling

In some hospital departments, 'care' means total care, but this of course is not uniform throughout the country, as Lin's experience shows. The findings of a recent study in Oxford highlight the lack of emphasis on caring for women's psychological and emotional needs at the pre-diagnosis, pre-operative and post-operative stages. The writer concludes that much needs to be done to improve the quality of after-care. On the other hand, one cancer specialist did tell me of his concern to get to know the patient as a person with their own individual, particular problems. In that way, he felt, social problems — such as housing, child care etc. could be brought to light and dealt with as well as psychological problems resulting from the need to adjust to something like a mastectomy. He sees the partners of mastectomy patients and encourages people to talk to him and ask for advice, explanations etc. about anything worrying them. One ex-mastectomy patient experienced the solicitous attitude of the staff as 'rather off-putting', although she did say that pre-operation counselling would

have been a great help.

If a woman finds her NHS service unsupportive — and I should be interested to hear readers' experiences, good or otherwise — she could find help from the few services available outside the NHS:—

*The Mastectomy Association* is a self-help organisation set up by Betty Westgate in December 1973. The service it provides is 'strictly non-medical, and concerned to complement medical and nursing care by giving information about bras, prostheses and swimwear, and by psychological understanding and support'. There are about 800 voluntary helpers in Britain and one or two in Ireland, each of whom has had a mastectomy and is 'willing to talk with and reassure other women who have recently had a breast removed'. Women who have been advised to have a mastectomy can also be helped, and sometimes women ask for a companion to accompany them to a radiotherapy or prosthesis-fitting session. Helpers are carefully chosen, for 'someone who hadn't come to terms with the experience herself could do more harm than good' says Ms Westgate. Leaflets are available for doctors and hospitals to hand to patients so that they can contact the Association if they want to. Respect for people's privacy prevents it from approaching women direct. Perhaps women's groups could find out if local hospitals have leaflets available. The service provided is free and entirely voluntary. The Department of Health has been approached for financial help but as yet has made no decision. Perhaps

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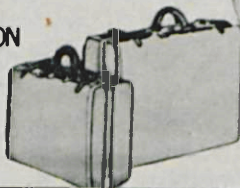


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it needs encouragement? Leaflets such as 'Helpful Hints' and 'Helpful Hints for Husbands' are available from Betty Westgate at the Mastectomy Association, 1 Colworth Road, Croydon CRO 7AD; please enclose sae. The Marie Curie Foundation provides various leaflets on cancer including 'Cancer of the Breast', 'Cancer of the Womb', 'The Prevention of Cancer' and 'Advice to Patients following Mastectomy'. It encourages women who would like further assistance to write to the Rehabilitation Officer and stresses that all enquiries are answered by 'professionals'. Send sae to their head office at 124 Sloane Street, London SW1.

As far as we know, there are no groups involved in giving and receiving support over a period of time. Joy Evans, who had a mastectomy two years ago writes of the tremendous psychological and mental problems she experiences, especially in the small hours of the morning when she can lie awake feeling certain that she has only months to live: "It is difficult, almost impossible, to confess to your doctor that when you tell him you are not sleeping too well, what you really mean is that your imagination runs amok and turns a poor night into several hours of pure hell." She goes on to say that the greatest help she has obtained is the 'very occasional chat' with a friend who lives far away and who is going through the same experiences and problems. If anyone is interested in being involved in an on-going, mentally supportive network, perhaps they would like to contact Spare Rib.

## The Right to Know

Some doctors do not necessarily believe that cancer patients have the right to know of their condition. In Britain, unlike the USA, it is not the general rule for people to be informed. For example, Dr. Gilliss feels that only a certain number of people can accept being told. He adds weight to his opinion by reminding us that the emotional and psychological state of the patient can affect her survival — on the basis of 'if she knows what's wrong, she might give up hope'. In any case, it is often difficult to predict the outcome of the disease, and some people surprise doctors by their progress, eg 'hopeless cases' living eight, ten or more years after initial treatment, apparently free from disease. However, he believes strongly that it is for the doctor to decide whether or not — and what — to tell the patient, *even if the individual concerned has requested to be told the truth about her situation*. This is the logical result of the present status quo with the balance of power between the doctor and patient being heavily loaded in favour of the doctor. That doctors can argue that it is kinder not to disclose distasteful information shows the inherent lack of respect for the dignity and basic human rights of the patient. Of course, some people feel that they would rather not know what is happening, but that should not mean that others should be prevented from knowing. The 'kindness' argument is in any case counter-productive, which soon becomes apparent to those who spend time amongst the reality of illness

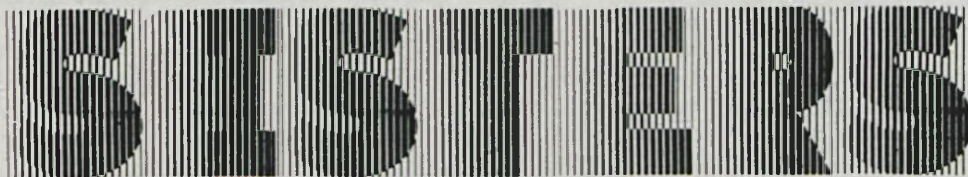
either as patients or workers on the wards, friends or relatives. People discover all-too-soon when the doctor is abusing the trust of the patient in the next bed or the next ward. If trust can be abused with one patient, the corollary must be that no patient can dare to trust the doctor. Hence, people can be in a state of dire anxiety and fear simply because of a doctor's misguided belief that patients are being protected. So much for protection!

One day, hopefully, the balance of power between doctors and the rest of the community will be equalised. Doctors will then be technicians, no more no less, harnessed to serve, and accountable — not to themselves in the self-regulating ivory towers of the Royal Colleges or the General Medical Council — but to those whom they serve. □

### Organisations

Mastectomy Association (see text)  
Marie Curie Foundation (see text)  
Women's National Cancer Control Campaign, 9 King Street, London (01-836 9901)  
British Cancer Council, 2 Harley Street, London W1 (01-274 4002): gives information.

Regional Cancer Services: there are four of these, in Manchester, Leeds, South West Thames and Wessex; (addresses can be obtained from your Area Health Authority or the British Cancer Council). They were set up by the Department of Health in order to bring awareness to the locality the latest developments in treatment, patient care, education. They provide an advisory and information service for anyone, including patients.



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# NEWS

*Mme Phan Thi Minh, a former resistance fighter in Danang, South Vietnam and now advisor to the Provisional Revolutionary Government's Foreign Minister, came to London for informal talks with the Foreign Office in May. A week earlier liberation commandos had seized the Presidential Palace in Saigon, marking the final downfall of the American-backed regime.*

*Phan Thi Minh interviewed by the Women in Indochina Study Group.*

## **MOTHERS BECAME PROSTITUTES SO THAT THEIR CHILDREN WOULD NOT DIE OF HUNGER**

*I think we should ask about the difference between the North and the South. Are the women in the South more emancipated from the old society because of their experience in the war?*

There is a certain difference, but it is not the degree of emancipation that is different. The conditions of the war were very different. Women in the South participated in the armed struggle, whereas in the North they were only in self-defence, civil defence units, anti-aircraft and militia for the defence of their factory or village.

There are better conditions in the North for women to lead a normal life with their children at the same time as getting an education. In the old days in the South, for instance, most of the women were illiterate. There are Presidents of Committees of the Women's Union for Liberation, who couldn't read. Immediately on being elected President, they had to learn to read and write to be able to do their job. A young girl, or one of their own children — daughter or son — would help them, as a secretary, to make their reports.

### **Wartime and Family**

*In this country women made a lot of advances during the Second World War, but afterwards returned very much to their role in the family. Do you think that this will happen in Vietnam?* Many of our friends have talked about this. But you see, although our friends in the North suffered the war of destruction, they didn't have enemy troops on their soil for 20 years. All the same, the emancipation of women continues, and in better conditions than in the South.

You see, we have a regime which ensures the equality of the sexes, and which ensures the emancipation of women. In the declaration of independence President Ho Chi Minh said, as he had said many times, that women are half of our people, and as long as women are not emancipated, are not free, the people are not free. That is why women can be equal to men, can have real liberty and independence in our country.

*For many women over here, the family is experienced as a prison, something that they want to get away from in order to find their liberation. But I have the impression that in Vietnam, a country that has been at war for such a long time, the family is something that everyone longs for.*

Yes, it is a tradition in our country. We are very attached to our families. And I think it is something which helped us to resist the American aggression — which is not only on the military but also on the cultural, moral and political planes. They tried to crush us, to crush the very cells of our society, which are the family.

But you see, the links between people of the same family have

remained very strong. A Vietnamese will always try to have news of the other members of his family. If they don't have news, they suffer a lot. Whereas I believe there are people in other countries who can live quite happily without wanting news of their relations.

*Did the marriage law apply also to the liberated areas in the South?*

Yes, there is a law. In the North the Constituent Assembly voted a Law of Marriage and the Family, which assures total equality between the husband and wife in all areas, even sometimes favouring the woman over the man. For instance, they consider that in a case of separation it is the woman who suffers most, and so the woman is more protected in law.

*Is it the same in the liberated areas of the South?*

Yes, the same thing is clearly stipulated in the programme of the National Front for Liberation, and also in the programme of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Which is why we think that from the point of view of rights we don't have a problem.

But right now the problem in the South is to combat the sequels, the evil things left by the old regime.

### **Young Girls and Mothers in Prostitution**

*I'd like to know about the prostitutes...*

Yes, it is a terrible problem for the cities of South Vietnam. The American troops spread their customs, which are really bad. Many people were transported and made into refugees, without any way of supporting themselves. This is why many young





girls became prostitutes, to feed their families. Mothers became prostitutes so that their children would not die of hunger. These things are very painful in our country.

The women who were in some sense obliged to do it can easily change, because the revolutionary forces assure work for all those who wish to work, and I think that in a very short time we will have no more unemployment. The women will be able to earn their living like the rest.

So the question for those women who didn't want to be prostitutes is easy. But there are also women who enjoyed the life, who don't like working, who preferred to earn their living without doing any work, who don't wish to work honestly. For those women it takes a certain time. In North Vietnam they have experience of this problem (*Tens of thousands of prostitutes were left in Hanoi after the French were forced to withdraw*).

If you leave them at liberty in their old haunt they would continue to follow that trade, and to corrupt others. This is why we regroup them in houses where they are taught a trade.

Those who have some education are given a training and the others are taught a skill. After a certain time — I should think about four or five years — everything is sorted out. Each of them has a trade or a profession, and they become honest women like the others. They marry, and when they think of their past, they feel they don't want to remember any more.

*Vietnamese woman with Mme Minh:* I think that the situation in the North after the signing of the Geneva Agreement and the situation in the South now are completely different. South Vietnam had more than twenty years under American aggression, and the influence of American culture is very dangerous.

*I think what we really want to know is: many young girls were forced into prostitution to support their families. How will they be treated? What will their psychological situation be? Is great shame attached to this?*

*Vietnamese woman with Mme Minh:* I think there are many different ways of helping them to concentrate, to teach them how to be good, and helpful citizens.

*Mme Minh:* The task of helping

them make a normal life is really very delicate. For example, there are women who are really cynical, who think that everybody is wicked, and they believe in nothing. They do not believe in human goodness. We have to surround them with women who really love them, who try to prove to them that human goodness does exist, that people really do want good things to happen to them.

And you see, after a certain time these women do begin to change. They are made to read books, even fairy stories, to give some freshness to their thoughts. In this way we witness the transformation of prostitutes who become . . . people like anyone else.

*How are they treated — in their villages for instance? Or by men? Are they treated with contempt?*

In the old days, yes. A lot of contempt. In our country we consider prostitution as something very bad, and those who were prostitutes were held in contempt by everybody. But with the people's government and the revolutionary cadres we have another point of view. We know that they are victims of social vices.

They are not criminals, and we must try to save them, to transform them. And it is on the basis of this point of view that we have undertaken all this work of re-education, and give them back a life like anyone else's.

**Orphanages Damage Children**  
*And what about children who have American fathers and Vietnamese mothers?*

In our country we don't make any difference. Even children with American fathers are considered children like any other. If they have no relations we try to get them adopted by families who will look after them like their own children.

In our country we don't like to organise orphanages. They damage children too much. The children always feel themselves to be orphans. They aren't happy to be known as orphans. That's why we search for families who want to adopt a child, and the adoption is usually made through the women's union. They are in touch with what families want to adopt a child, are capable of looking after the child properly, and of considering it as their own child. This is the way we have been able to resolve the problem of orphans in our zone, and they





South Vietnam at war: In the river area around Qbi Nbon, US soldiers wait for the last of the villagers to leave before they bombard the area

are fairly numerous.

*So the policy is to shut the big orphanages, is it? And to put the children in families?*

For the moment the children must be fed and properly looked after. It's towards that end that we are asking for help. They must not be left to die of hunger and disease. Whereas to place them in an adopted family takes time: the families must be carefully chosen. You can't just throw children into families haphazardly.

## Military Women Are Simple Comrades

*Going back to the military struggle itself, can you say a bit about the role of women in the army?*

People often speak of military women in our country. They are simple comrades like the others, they lead a very simple life. They have a family, children: they are occupied in production to feed their children, they're busy with their housework. At the same time they participate in the struggle.

When the enemy comes they take up their arms and fight, and when the enemy has gone they return to their normal tasks.

Women who make military life their profession — that we don't have. There are women in the army who are nurses and doctors. But to fight all the time — that we don't have.

*What about the role of women in the high command of the army?*

You have heard perhaps of Madame Dinh, the second in command of the South Vietnamese Liberation Army. It was she who was the first to launch armed resistance in the country; it was in her province of Ben Tre.

It was at the time of the Geneva Convention and the agreement was not being kept. All the resistance forces who had fought against the French were being regrouped in the North, and the ones who remained in the South, who were trying to take up their normal lives again, were harassed and massacred, imprisoned, tortured. At that moment the people were in despair. There is no other way of putting it. It was very moving.

A little anecdote to show you what the feeling of the people was. An old man was listening to the radio, and he heard the voice of Ho Chi Minh. He didn't under-

stand the technology and he asked the people around if he couldn't call Ho Chi Minh through the radio.

He said that he wanted to call the President to order armed resistance against the oppressive power of the government. This was the general feeling of the population: an old man who understood nothing, absolutely uneducated, wanted armed struggle.

And it was thus that Madame Dinh, in her province, grouped together again the old cadres of the revolution against the French, and organised an army. Their arms were bamboo sticks, kitchen knives, and they were the first to launch armed resistance. It was thus that she captured several government posts in her province and formed a tiny liberated zone in Ben Tre. And it was on that basis that the other provinces followed her example to launch armed resistance throughout South Vietnam; to arrive at victories; moving on from those victories to reach the Paris Agreements in 1972; and then the victory of a few days ago.

*And she's been there from the beginning to the end.*

You can look at Madame Dinh to see what is the role of women in this struggle. It was a woman who unleashed it.

## You Can Do Many Things

*Is there anything that the women's movement here can do to help the women's movement in South Vietnam?*

You can do many things. We always ask for international solidarity. Because, as you know, our struggle has been very hard. The country has suffered a lot of destruction. In the reconstruction we need many things. Our needs are really very great. And above all else we want to perpetuate, to continue that international solidarity. The movements, the friends who have contributed to our fight in the past, to liberate the country, continue to take part in the reconstruction of Vietnam.

**RECONSTRUCTION FUND**  
Send a personal donation or take a collection in your group, college, or workplace. Act now to help Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in reconstructing their countries devastated by US imperialism. Make cheques/POs payable to Reconstruction Fund and send to 101 Gower Street, London WC1. □



## GAY WORKERS ACKNOWLEDGE DEBT TO WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

About 50 people met in Leeds for the first national Gay Workers' Conference on May 10. About a quarter of them were women. The conference was poorly publicised, badly organised, and few of the people had been delegated by their trade unions.

But most were trade union members: APEX, AUEW, EEU/PTU, NUT, T&GWU and UPW included (see *Note*). Unlike most conferences on 'sexual politics', white collar unions were under-represented, apart from teachers. Because of the belief that gay teachers are bent on seducing/corrupting children, they suffer far more blatant discrimination than, for example, media workers.

The structure of the conference, with its agenda of special interest workshops, broke down after the first morning, probably because the discussion of a gay workers' movement is at too early a stage to be structured and sub-divided. Even so, after two days of plenary session and dwindling attendance (three men ended up in hospital after being attacked at a disco; others were alienated by the politics of the conference or the lack of organisation) many ideas had been raised and some practical decisions made.

A second national conference will be held in the autumn, giving Leeds GLF time to organise a meeting place and local groups time to organise local support; Bradford GLF will produce a national newsletter, with information from local groups and Leeds on the progress towards the conference; and a draft Gay Workers' Charter is under discussion.

### Sexuality and Sickness

It was the political background of many of the people attending which made this conference different. Many came from political organisations — the Communist Party, International Socialists, and International Marxist Group, as well as the Labour Party. Many were no longer members.

Personally some had found that their sexuality was, at best, liberally ignored by their organisations; or, at worst,

classed as a 'sickness' of a decadent capitalism. Politically, homosexuality had often been seen as a diversion from the class struggle, or a perversion that would only alienate the working class. Socialist organisations are not free of the myth that homosexuals are all men, and upper class arty types with lower middle class boyfriends from drapery departments afflicted with lisping wrists.

Such organisations have often assumed that all forms of sexual oppression will only, but inevitably, disappear under socialism, so any fight against them now is a waste of time. Those that think of homosexuality as a sickness of a decadent society assume that straightforward heterosexuality alone will exist under socialism. As one delegate at the conference said: "The struggle is also to book our seats for the socialist revolution so we don't get put in concentration camps."

### Debt to Women's Movement

What else the struggle is about, and how it should be carried out did not emerge clearly. The debt of the gay movement to the ideas, work and experience of the women's movement was acknowledged by several speakers. The political questions of sexuality, sexual roles at work and at home, and 'popular' ideas about these were seen as crucially relevant. However, the question of what place these have in keeping society going in its present form was not directly asked.

As the conference was primarily concerned with what action over the rights of gay workers could be taken, it did not try to produce answers to why such oppression of homosexuals exists and why the labour movement should be concerned with it. But clearly delegates were divided over their answers. There was general agreement on the need to use the labour movement as a channel of communication to gay workers, who may well be particularly isolated and trapped in an acute separation of roles (straight/camp) between work and social life.

But should a gay workers' movement be just concerned with personal liberation from oppressive stereotypes, i.e. giving individuals the confidence to be open about being gay? Several speakers described their

personal experience of 'coming out' at work, generally agreeing that this made life much easier than hiding round corners from the inevitable rumours and often malicious gossip.

A woman shop steward from a Bradford TV factory pointed out the limitations of this. When she repeatedly tried to raise the question of gay rights at trade union meetings, the convenor said: "Why do you keep pushing it? You know we accept you." And for some people at the conference, it was only acceptance by society that they wanted.

They wanted to see a gay movement, free of politics, united in 'educating' the public about homosexuality. Then, ignorance and prejudice would together be banished, leaving gays free to join in the promotional job opportunities available to others.

### Liberalism or Change?

This essentially liberal attitude — that regards oppression as merely a function of lack of education rather than an integral part of a certain system — did not seem to be shared by most delegates. They were less concerned with becoming acceptable to society, than with changing society in such a way that rigid sexual stereotypes for work and outside would become irrelevant.

The question everyone was asking, of course, was how gays should organise, and over what issues. Perhaps influenced by the Working Women's Charter, the conference generally agreed on the value of a Gay Rights Charter that could be used as a focus for the struggle within the labour movement, and a means of linking local groups round the same national demands.

The major points of a Charter — sexual law reform for men, and the end of discrimination against gays at work — could be raised through the trade union structure; though it can be even more difficult for gays than for women to convince a trade union that their problems are a matter of general political and economic concern. Proving discrimination can also be harder for gays. No employer says "Sorry dear, you're queer", but speakers reported employers objecting to their mannerisms and style of dress, even where these were invented by an employer's prejudice.

A question that wasn't asked, but will surely arise, is whether lesbian feminists will feel they could or should work in a mixed sex gay movement, and whether the oppression of gay women workers is significantly different from that of men. □

Sarah Benton

*Note: Association of Professional, Executive and Clerical Staffs; Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers; Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Trades Union; National Union of Teachers; Transport and General Workers Union; Union of Post Office Workers.*

## NCCL LAUNCHES COLLECTIVE FUND FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

A new Rights For Women campaign, as well as a novel scheme to fund it, was unveiled by the National Council for Civil Liberties at a press conference in Fleet Street on May 19.

Because the Charity Commissioners do not view women as a disadvantaged group, charitable trusts are not interested in women's rights. Even if they were, the grants would run out sooner or later. So NCCL has come up with the idea of getting large numbers of people to give small sums of money on a regular basis to finance a Rights For Women unit.

For this collectors are needed who will pledge to collect from ten people either 10p a week, £1 a month or £10 a year. When the initial target of £6,000 is met, a Women's Rights Officer will be appointed to continue the Council's good work.

The unit will advise women of their rights under the batch of new laws taking effect next year; it will produce practical guides, advise individual women, run workshops throughout the country so women can learn how to act as lay advocates before industrial tribunals, and take test cases to court.

For some time NCCL has had to work for women's rights on a shoe string, relying to a large extent on voluntary labour. And it has had an impact out of all proportion to its resources. But but this cannot go on forever. □ Collectors please contact the Rights for Women Collective Fund, NCCL, 186 King's Cross Road, London WC1 9DE.



## SPARE RIB "BIGOTED, EXCLUSIVE"?

When Pat Sayers sent a copy of *Spare Rib* to Colin Williams, Principal Librarian for Staffordshire, she was told "the policy of the County Library is not to purchase material of a sectarian nature . . . and *Spare Rib* clearly falls into this category".

Rather than take "disruptive of unity, bigoted, exclusive" (his definition of sectarian) for an answer, Pat alerted her local weekly paper, 25,000-circulation *Tamworth Herald*, who made a front page story out of the "Campaign move after ban on 'feminist' magazine". Whether or not there was a demand for *Spare Rib* in Tamworth before, Mr Williams will certainly find one there now.

If we did this every time *Spare Rib* was not available in a public library, it would be a sure fire way to break down this kind of prejudice, and to ensure that *Spare Rib* is available in the future. If you'd like to help with your area, get in touch with Pat Sayers, 1 Orchard Street, Tamworth, Staffs. □

## MP DEFENDS ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON HOSPITAL

Since February, when *Spare Rib* reported at length on the uncertainty surrounding the future of the all-women's Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in the Euston Road, little has happened. Support for the hospital's continued existence has grown and a petition has been signed by 20,000 women.

The hospital is ticking over with the help of agency nurses and locums, and the Health Service has set its cumbersome consultation procedures in motion. You could say some of the heat has been taken out of the situation.

But on May 16 Lena Jeger, MP, tried to breathe some fire back into the issue in an adjournment debate before a near-empty House of Commons. She referred to an early-day motion, signed by 45 members, which read: "This House, appreciating the unique historical traditions and special services of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, regrets the threatened attempt to

close it, having regard both to the wishes of women patients from all over the country and to the opportunities for women doctors to reach consultant status in this hospital; and asserts the principle in the reorganisation of the National Health Service that small may be good."

The EGA remained one of the few hospitals where women could be sure of being treated by women, she declared, and no one should interfere with this freedom of choice. "The small proportion of women consultants throughout the National Health Service makes it difficult in general hospitals for the wishes of patients in this connection to be met," she added.

The real problem with the hospital, Ms Jeger said, was that it did not fit "on the Procrustes bed of the bureaucratic ideal of the National Health Service." It was special and untidied the pattern.

But many women would rather go to the EGA than to the giant new Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead, she went on. "There is a growing reaction against the concept that bigness is a virtue." Her sentiments were shared by two other MPs present — both male — who invoked the spirit of International Women's Year in her defence.

However, Dr David Owen, Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security, who weighed in for the Government, thought everyone was being a bit mulish and paranoid about the EGA. The House always resented any form of change or closure or even examination, he commented bitterly. "We have to get away from the situation where, just because we open a process of consultation, everyone immediately leaps to the conclusion that that inevitably means closure."

He was most sympathetic about the need for the EGA's services, he assured the handful of Hon Members. But at present the issue was still being thrashed out in consultations at local level and it was not for him to prejudge it.

*\*The outcry generated so far may have held up closure, but if the hospital is to continue it needs more support. If you care about it, write to your MP or Dr Owen, or get in touch with the EGA's Action Committee, at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, Euston Road, London NW1. □*

Lucy Hodges

## 1,400 OUT AT LUTON ELECTROLUX



Electrolux equal pay strike, Luton

The equal pay strike at the Luton Electrolux fridge and vacuum cleaner factory entered its fourth week at the beginning of June with its 1,400 women and men more determined than ever. A mass meeting at the end of May voted to have no more meetings with the management until some new offer is made, and the strike is now the longest in the factory's history.

Many of the 600 women in the factory do the same work as men but earn a lot less. "I sit right next to a man on my track and he earns £15 more than me just because he wears a pair of trousers".

Not surprisingly the women are not satisfied with the management's offer to them of up to £4 a week with back pay. "The offer is attractive in the short-term, but it's not equal pay, is it?"

The men are solidly backing equal pay because their earnings could be threatened next year by the management's proposals. Because separate women's rates will be illegal from January 1976 Electrolux is proposing to introduce a new set of unisex rates, the lowest of which is below the current lowest male rate.

The company claims that no man will take a cut in pay as a result of the new pay grading. The workers are not convinced by these assurances and consider that they contravene the Equal Pay Act because many men do the same work as women.

The strike has the official backing of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and the General and Municipal Workers Union. The Transport and General Workers Union is also supporting the strike by instructing its members not to transport Electrolux goods or make deliveries to the factory.

The TGWU is also stopping Electrolux goods and components from coming in or going out through the docks. This means that the Swedish-owned multinational cannot resist the strike by getting fridges and cleaners from its German subsidiary imported into Britain.

With this support and the determination of the women and men the management must be starting to get worried. □



# NEWS

## ASTMS CRECHE IS BREAKTHROUGH IN TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY

The 1975 Annual Conference of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, held this May at Bournemouth, saw a breakthrough in trade union democracy. For the first time, a major national union had a creche as part of its conference facilities for delegates and visitors.

The creche, spurred by rank and file initiative and pressure, was organised by the Divisional Council No. 15 Action Committee on Sex Discrimination after it became clear that creche facilities were not going to be provided. The Divisional Council (which covers West, City and East London) provided the money, and helped in circulating the information.

Because of the lateness in organisation, we were prepared to provide the facility regardless of the demand, in order to establish a precedent for future years. We therefore compromised and provided places for up to twenty children. We felt it essential that the creche be properly run so that parents leaving children there could do so without worry.

We contacted Bournemouth Day Nursery who put us in touch with a member of their staff, Jenny Owen. She was given some time off in order to run the creche, and she was also able to borrow some equipment from the Nursery. The second Nurse was contacted through an encounter with an ASTMS member who was an ex-policeman with the Bournemouth force! An infant school-teacher volunteered to come along in case there were older children who needed to be taken out.

The Divisional Delegation was booked into a large hotel, and this enabled us to hire two rooms for the duration of the Conference at a very reduced rate. We obtained insurance, and then we were in business, starting on the Friday evening when a reception to celebrate International Women's Year was being given by ASTMS.

Our first 'customer' was a trainee officer with the Union



Jenny Owen in charge of ASTMS creche

who took the opportunity to introduce his wife to his colleagues and to enable her to attend the reception. Over the whole period of the Conference, only nine children attended; but throughout the Conference, many delegates came to us and praised the idea. They also expressed a regret that it hadn't been done earlier in order that they could have brought their families. They had already booked accommodation and were, at that stage, unable to alter it.

Thus, in spite of the apparently disappointing response, we felt that we have demonstrated that a clear demand for such provision is there, and should be catered for. Obviously as creche provision becomes a standard part of union facilities, both women and men who would like to stand as delegates for the Annual Conference but cannot because of the problems of looking after children, would be able to take a more active part in the union's affairs.

We see such a provision as an

essential part of the fight among women to organise within the union to gain full rights not only at their places of work, but within the union. An interesting spin-off from the creche was that many of the male delegates were able to use the opportunity to involve their partners in the work they were doing, something much appreciated by all concerned! □

Jo Sinclair

Convenor: Division 15  
Action Committee on Sex  
Discrimination

## WOMEN PROTEST AGAINST IRISH PRISONERS' CONDITIONS

A Women and Socialism day conference for women on Ireland, held in London on May 10, passed a resolution in support of a letter to the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, protesting against the conditions of two women prisoners in Limerick Jail.

The women are Rose Dugdale, who is on hunger strike, and Rita O'Hare, who was recently jailed on a charge of aiding an escape attempt from Portlaoise. Rose has not been given her mail and presents for her baby; is only allowed visits from her parents; and even her lawyer is refused permission to see her. Women who were at the conference hope the resolution will be the start of a campaign for women political prisoners in Ireland, North and South.

The organising collective for the conference aimed to give women facts and understanding about Ireland. The need for this was stressed in the opening

remarks from the chair: public opinion helped to bring the troops out of Vietnam, but after five years of war in Ireland, a struggle on our own doorstep, there's been no comparable movement in Britain.

If people have felt immobilised by the complexities and contradictions in the Irish situation, the conference might help to isolate the main enemy, imperialism in Ireland. And while the only solution therefore, to the Irish people's struggle is socialism, we still have to support their immediate pressure to get the British army out.

Two women had come over from Northern Ireland for the conference. They explained the background to the elections which happened a few days before. The United Ulster Unionist Council, a coalition of three hardline protestant parties, won a landslide victory over more moderate protestant politicians. In the 1960s the latter were trying to be more conciliatory to catholics. They were attempting to save Northern Ireland's industry by attracting foreign investment, and needed to build an image of a liberal modern and troublefree society, and harmonise with the Southern government, who were making the same economic changes themselves.

This provoked the hardline response from the parties that are in power now, based on fear in the protestant working class and local traditional industrialists that their privileges would be threatened.

60% of the catholics boycotted the election: they know now that they can never get their democratic rights in a so-called democratic election, because the majority is always on sectarian lines. None of the likely future scenarios outlined by the speakers is acceptable to the catholic community: not total integration into Britain, nor a protestant-backed UDI, nor a repartition of the North, with catholic areas and people transferred to the South.

The speakers said that everyone is expecting an escalating civil war, and this would happen only sooner if the troops were withdrawn. The British troops won't prevent it happening — they haven't protected the catholics from sectarian violence so far, and are one more oppressor the catholic community wants off its back.

The conference was overwhelmingly in support of the demand for pulling out the troops so that the real situation, with all its contradictions, can be faced up to by the people in Ireland themselves. □



# CLASSIFIEDS

If you want to join or start a group, find work or a travel companion, start a household or share a house, having something to sell or swap . . . then run your own Classified Ad.

Rates: 5p per word, 10p caps. £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad.) 50p for box numbers.

Payment: Ads. must be prepaid and sent to Spare Rib, 4 Newburgh St., London W1A 4XS. Please make all cheques and PO's payable to Spare Ribs Ltd.

Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

Copy date: June 30th for July 23rd.

There wasn't enough room in this issue for the Classified Form, but will make sure there's more space left next time.

## GROUPS

Falmouth Women's Group welcomes new members. Contact Abigail. Tel: Falmouth 313260

Beckenham/Bromley Group new members welcome. Phone 658 3636 or 658 6599

Rickmansworth Women's Group starting, meets Thursdays. Contact Gillian R72288, Eleanor R75993

FINSBURY PARK area would like to join/begin WL Group phone Caroline 607 7035

I am starting a WOMEN'S LIBERATION ART, PERFORMANCE AND DISCUSSION GROUP. If you are interested in joining, and live nearby, please phone Shirley Cameron at Grantham 67248, or write to: 70 New St, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 8BB

New CHE group forming for the Middlesbrough/Stockton/Darlington area needs as many women as possible. Anyone interested write to Marlon England, 93 Abingdon Rd, Middlesbrough or phone Ted Clapham at Gateshead 772660

CLEVELAND anyone interested in forming a group contact Linda Gulsborough 4837

TWICKENHAM new group starting. Phone Linda 898 4404 or Janey 892 1770

KINGSTON/NEW MALDEN areas Anyone interested in forming women's group phone Cat 390 0898 or Eleanor 949 2596

Homosexual/Bisexual women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice—make it louder! Meetings and socials throughout Britain. Send SAE 9x4" to CHE (332) 28 Kennedy St, Manchester 2

## BOOKS ETC

FOR GAY WOMEN: THE GIRL'S GUIDE 1975. The all new, pocket size, discreet, international bar/club guide and complete directory: organisations, centres, publications, etc. All Britain plus 25 other countries. 1500 listings, £1.00 only from: The Girls' Guide, 103 Hammersmith Rd, London W14 (mail order only). Also at: Compendium, 240 Camden High St, NW1; Sterling's Bookshop, 57 St Martin's Lane, WC2; Kermac Books, 56 Gloucester Rd, SW7. And on sale at the SAPPHO discos.

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe. 40p inc. post. BCM/PETREL, London WC1 6XX. Meetings held every Tuesday, 7.30pm, upstairs room, The Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London W2. Off Westbourne Grove. 40p admission for non-subscribers.

Women and Socialism Conference Papers 3 — available from Jill Lampert, 26 Lonsdale Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9RA. 12p.

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

New Design WL Badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. Postage) from Sisterhood Books c/o 22 Great Windmill St, London W1

NATIONAL LESBIAN NEWS-LETTER first issue out now—with news, views and group info—articles, ideas and information needed now for next issue. Subs £1 a year, Maggie Sellers, 3 Dunlop Ave, Lenton, Nottingham.

## PERSONAL

Single mother, slightly disabled, isolated, wonders if you are too? Mutual morale boosting Box no.372

Would like making friends with other readers. Stephen (Gipsy Hill) Box no.376

I am starting training as an acupuncturist, which I believe will be of value to the women's movement. The fees for the course, however, are very high (£300 a year for three years), and I really would appreciate contributions from anyone who has that kind of money, and thinks it a worthwhile project. Thanks. Sally c/o 54 Brougham Rd, E8

FEMALE, 18, seeks new friendships and interests (London) Box no. 375

Bisexual student 24 visiting Europe Nov 75—Jan 76 wants contact feminist groups and individual gay people in Britain (and France, Sweden etc) especially anyone travelling around Europe then. Also appreciate information about inexpensive London accommodation with gay students. Barbara Rigby 38 Hibberd St Hamilton New South Wales 2503 Australia

Dave rejects Male/Female stereotypes, seeks humorous musical/literary women comrade, Manchester area. Box no.371

Would American woman like to marry English man for mutual convenience? Christian 01-637 1220 day

MAN, mid-thirties, many interests, writer, businessman, feels he would make a thoroughly bad father, but also feels he needs, and can give, a lot of love in the right marriage. Thinks he would relate best to girls in the 21-31 age range, who, like him, do not need parenthood. Respects women's rights, expects them to respect his. Jeremy Ward, 21 Leyborne Avenue, Ealing, London W13 9RB

STOKE man, 26, seeks friendship liberated women. Lover of children, animals, music and outdoor activities. Marriage definitely out, but would consider equal share of responsibility of home with right person. Box no.363

## ACCOMMODATION

GRADUATE SEEKS ROOM in house in Reading area. Box no.374

Large room to let mid July—Sept. Write Frankie 72 Denbigh St, SW1  
People seek others to find, buy outright share large house, South London. Must have/be able to borrow approx £2,500 for own room/share communal living space and garden. Box no.341

Modernised pied a terre WC1 semi-basement, bedsitter (wall bed, fitted carpets, curtains etc) bathroom, kitchen/pantry overlooking plant area. Leasehold 36 years £10,750 Enquiries 01-278 1501

Charming detached Georgian cottage (2 hrs London ¼ hr Bristol/Bath) consists porch, plant room, hall, cloakroom, sitting-room, dining-room, kitchen, cellar, 3 bedrooms, bathroom and small garden overlooking surrounding countryside. Wotton-under-edge, Gloucs, £16,250. Enquiries 01-278 1501

## SERVICES

PRIMAL THERAPY write Jenny James, Atlantis, Burtonport, Letterkenny, Co Donegal, Eire

Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies Highgate area Tel: 01-348 5593

FEMINIST ASTROLOGER: for a thoroughly analysed birth-chart, ring Alison 01-960 2723

Discover yourself and the future through astrology, birthcharts designed and interpreted cheaply and scientifically, send stamp for details. Ms James, BCM 9022, London WC1 6XX

Homosexual women and men can ring Icebreakers on 01-274 9590 every evening of the year between 7.30 and 10.30 to talk over their problems with other gay people

## COURSES

IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR A NEW CAREER. Women (21 to 45) who want a rewarding and professional career can overcome lack of education and educational qualifications. Full-time study (2 years) leads to CNA Certificate (Arts/Social Science/Social Studies): also 1 year Foundation Course. Subjects English, History, Sociology, Psychology etc. GRANTS ASSURED: Apply (5x4p stamp for forms) NOW to Hillcroft College, Surbiton, Surrey. Tel 01-399 2688

## REMOVALS

MOTHERTRUCKERS for removals. Ring Cheryl 960 2723

Removals. Women will move you around London, UK, Europe up to two tons. Tel: Suzy 624 1951

## JOBS

Energetic playgroup leader needed for afternoon session of parent run playgroup. Central London. Qualification/experience necessary. Ring Kate 624 5061 or Helen 262 6909

BRADFORD WOMEN'S AID have a vacancy for a full time playleader to work with the children at their refuge for battered women. Salary negotiable. Apply Box no.373

ACTION WITH PENSIONERS: Kensington & Chelsea Task Force need a full-time worker to become committed to the pensioners' movement, to work with individual isolated pensioners and pensioners' action groups. Demanding and probably exhausting but . . . well . . . for further details phone 969 9105/9106

Spare Rib badly needs two people with energy, imagination, commitment and practical experience to work full-time. One to build up its circulation by expanding the distribution, and planning and carrying out regional (and other) publicity. The other to put single-minded energy into selling space to suitable advertisers. Please contact Rose Ades, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS, in writing, giving full details of experience.

## EVENTS

Woman and Art: A Weekend Workshop. An intensive workshop for women artists and art historians will be held at the Franklin School, 43 Adelaide Rd, London NW3, 01-722 0562, on July 18, 19, 20. 50p. 'Womanhouse' a film about a project made by students in the Feminist Art Program in California will be shown during the weekend. Call for details. Participants and observers welcomed.

Workshop on women and images in the media—the forms of representation/oppression 10-5, 5th July. Further details 4a Chamberlain St NW1

Sappho Discos, June 28, July 25, August 23 at the Sols Arms Pub, Hampstead Rd, London NW1. Admission 50p. Women only.

## Courses in Art and Design

### Fine Art

This is a three year course which offers varied media options in two and three dimensions. It aims to explore, question and study the tradition, practice and role of the Fine Arts.

### Fashion/Textile

This is a broad based three year course in Fashion & Textile studies which provides direct admission to the licenseship of the society of Industrial Artists in either Fashion or Textile Design.

### Communication Design

This is a broad based three year course in communication, designed to give a student both the practical ability and the theoretical understanding to enable him to deal effectively with the wide variety of communication problems found in contemporary society. The course encompasses both the visual and the verbal, and comprises experience in three main media areas:

photography : tv/audio : type/graphics  
and allows the individual student to develop an eventual bias within these media.

Entrance requirements for all courses Candidates should normally have 5 GCE 'O' levels and have completed a Foundation Course. These conditions may exceptionally be relaxed for candidates of talent who seem particularly able to benefit from the course.

Further details and an application form may be obtained from: The Registrar, Ref. PM101 North East London Polytechnic, FREEPOST/1, London, E17 4BR. Tel: 01-527 0933.

## North East London Polytechnic





# ABORTION NEWS

## LOCAL ACTION

*We asked some groups to write to us about what they had been doing. This is just what we have received so far. We would be interested to hear of anything going on elsewhere, and so would NAC in London, for their files and newsletter.*

### National Abortion Campaign

On February 7 the Abortion (Amendment) Bill obtained its Second Reading with a majority of 203 for and 88 against. In early March some women called a public meeting in London to discuss setting up a national coordinating body to mobilise opposition to the Bill.

The slogan decided upon was "A Woman's Right To Choose" and the specific short-term brief to defeat White's Bill.

Out of this meeting a group of women began to set up the apparatus for spreading information and organising action, with an office at 80 Railton Road, London SE24 (01-274 8498), and later another at the LSE in the Beaver Publications Room, St Clements Building, Houghton Street, London WC2 (01-405 7686 x 573). The offices are run by volunteers and one full-time temporary worker.

NAC sees as its main task the organisation of protest against this Bill, and in particular the building of a national demonstration in London on June 21, for which an ad-hoc June 21 demo committee was set up. Support and sponsorship have come from a number of organisations and individuals, doctors and lawyers, trade unions.

From the headquarters, NAC tries to provide a service for local groups — 50 have formed over the last three months. Coordination has been established in eight regions, and a London committee meets fortnightly to coordinate the activities of the 12 groups in London. NAC works alongside WACC and WRTC (responsible for the petition).

We are trying to ensure that activities don't stop over the summer, and are thinking of a national conference in the early autumn. This would discuss the

success of the campaign to date, our future orientation and the future structure of the organisation.

Although it is necessary to mobilise against this Bill now, we are equally concerned about the '67 Act, and one of the questions to be discussed is whether to voice criticisms of it as part of the campaign, and how to mobilise support along the lines of free abortion on demand. □

Liz Adams, NAC

### Bristol

"I don't believe in Women's Lib and all that, but I'm fed up with men telling us what to do. Yes, I'll sign it." One woman among the 4,000 people who had signed the petition in Bristol by mid-May.

A tremendous amount of concern has been shown about the Bill — women and men coming up to us at our "stalls" in shopping centres, many who'd not heard about it before but were anxious to sign.

Of course we've encountered opposition too — mainly calm, although the Women's Centre received a call from an irate, threatening man protesting about an "obscene" poster on a lamp-post outside his frontdoor (because he is against abortion, or because the term "backstreet abortion" offends or disturbs some people?).

We removed the poster, but perhaps our immediate reaction was too hasty — would the police have prosecuted? We might even have come off best from it in the end. An open meeting at the Students' Union attracted a few SPUC activists who tried their best to disrupt any serious discussion.

Contact with doctors — GPs, the Brook Advisory Centre, and gynaecologists — has been encouraging. And with trainee social workers too, not all of them young. We've had a meeting in the Medical School, and one is planned for a health centre. There have been many trade union resolutions, and some trade unionists, as well as others, have been to see local MPs. Among those submitting evidence to the Committee we know of one shop steward who has found a lot of support in her factory.

### Cambridge

We saw our first aim as education, particularly of

doctors. We drew up a circular letter pointing out the effects of the Bill, in particular on clinical freedom, and sent it to every GP in Cambridge City and Shire and also to the Cambridge consultant gynaecologists.

We felt we could only expect each doctor to write one letter, and that a letter to the Select Committee would have the most impact, so we did not ask them to reply to us; but two dozen did, all but one opposed to the Bill.

We also sent a circular to women's organisations in Cambridge, drew up a short fact sheet to distribute while collecting petition signatures, and wrote a question and answer sheet on common fallacies about abortion. We did street theatre in major shopping areas on Saturdays (script available from the Women's Centre, 48 Eden Street, Cambridge). This showed what life would be like under the new Bill for a working woman with three children and another pregnancy.

The campaign in Cambridge has been helped by the high level of awareness and feeling about rape. Three lawyers have given as their opinion that rape victims who became pregnant would not be exempt from the clauses of the new Bill, and would be unlikely to get abortions, as most rape victims are young, healthy women, not likely to commit suicide if refused an abortion.\* People here who felt the legislation didn't affect their lives suddenly felt involved when they realised this.

*\* Under the '67 Act, rape victims have got abortions when necessary on the grounds that the injury to their mental health would be greater than if the pregnancy were terminated. If this amendment became law, the onus would be on the doctor to prove in court that the woman risked a "serious" mental injury.*

### Chippenham

Chippenham Women's Liberation group and the North Wilts NCCL are trying to inform people of the implications of the Bill. We are holding public meetings, collecting signatures and distributing leaflets in the street.

After seeing our MP we decided to send out questionnaires to find out local doctors' attitudes to the Bill. Twenty out of 30 have replied, and we are drawing the results together to present to our MP.

We'd be pleased to hear of any other activities in Wiltshire — phone Chippenham 50959.

### Liverpool

A letter signed by women's groups, doctors and MPs was submitted to the Women's Committee of the Trades Council. Their resolution to the general body of the Trades Council was accepted — quite an achievement as it's predominantly male and the area's so Catholic.

The Women's Committee proposed having a woman speaker at the May Day rally. Renee Short came, the first woman speaker here since Bessie Braddock! There was a big NAC delegation on the march, and the Trades Council also arranged a public meeting on June 9.

An exhibition and street theatre in the shopping centre got a favourable response and 1,700 signatures. One woman in the group, a teacher in a Roman Catholic school in the north end of the city, was spotted by her headmistress and told off at school, even threatened with the sack for her "morals". She's taking it up with the educational committee of her trade union.

The clause on foreign women is crucial in Liverpool because 25 women from Ireland get abortions here every week. Of these at least ten are from the south, where there is no legal contraception. They would definitely be classed as "foreign", and so denied access to abortion in England.

### London

Street theatre seemed a good way of getting people involved, and reaching women where they so often are — out shopping for their families.

Women from the South London Working Women's Charter Campaign went to the first meeting where NAC was formed, and started a NAC group in South London. Twelve of them wrote a play, rehearsed it for a month, and from May 3 were on the streets every Saturday.

It's a 15 minute play, with a short history of abortion, a political history of White's Bill, and sketches of situations it would cause if it were law: a young pregnant girl dumped by her boyfriend and parents; a doctor, with two judges behind; SPUC hiding under the chairs; and a woman with housing problems and too many kids



# ABORTION NEWS

come to ask for an abortion.

Questions it raised were very close to everyone, and they had to identify. Of course it shocked some people, who were disgusted to hear sex spoken of in the street. Some teenagers watching asked to see it over again, but on the whole there was little feedback, not even much heckling. The audience remained an anonymous crowd. In early June the group decided to stop performing so often, but will put on the play at the June 21 demo.

The West London Theatre Workshop has also produced a 20 minute play, *The Right To Choose*, for use at meetings or in

Bill, BMA support for the June 21 demo, publication of the results of the council meeting, and regional meetings to discuss the White Bill.

They stress that they do not support the BMA, but are using it for publicity for the abortion campaign and to get more doctors involved.

## Nottingham

Women from the movement are working together, in NAC, with trade unionists. Local unions, the Trades Council, Labour Party wards and local organisations like NCCL have all passed resolutions against the Bill.

We joined the Birmingham

Luard, who thought that the Select Committee was considering the Lane Report and the whole question of the working of the Act, rather than just the White Bill.

Fortunately we were able to convince him he was wrong by showing him David McKie's report of the debate in the *Lancet* (15/2/75), which draws attention to the confusion in the House after the vote.

An hour's phone-in on Radio Oxford was useful, both because it gave some of our supporters a chance to make points, and because it showed the muddle people get into over this issue. Quite a few calls went along the lines "I had a terrible time during my pregnancy and I didn't want another one at all. But now you can hear my lovely little girl and I can't tell you how glad I am that I didn't do anything. Anyway I don't think I was fit to decide then. It should be up to the doctors."

## WORKSHOP CRISIS

The Women's Liberation Workshop's current financial crisis is due to be discussed at its bi-annual meeting on June 28.

The last two weeks of May brought in £600 in donations, but bills totalling £320 are still owing.

Payment of office workers and mailing cost of the weekly newsletter are not covered by weekly book sales on the premises, mail orders and newsletter subscriptions.

"We can't pay our bills and carry on", one office worker said. "So we've had to put the emphasis on carrying on."

The office workers hope that ideas for an effective and long-term method of finance — perhaps regular contributions from women committed to the Workshop — will be worked out at the bi-annual.

Please send donations to Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham Street, London WC2. □

## INFORMATION SERVICE

Representatives of about fifty women's groups met on May 17 and agreed that Leeds should set up a national information service for the women's liberation movement.

This contact and referral service, which plans to start in September, will promote communication within the movement for women living outside London. A newsletter will be produced twice a month to advertise and provide reportbacks on campaigns, conferences, demonstrations and other topics.

A revised constitution stresses that the service, which is in no way a policy-making body for the WLM, will not provide any information that contravenes any of the six demands of the WLM.

Suggested subscription for groups is £3 per quarter and £3 per year for individuals. "We realise that this sounds a lot of money, but it is paying for an information service which will hopefully be well used, as well as the newsletter". Estimated yearly costs are £6,000.

*Spare Rib* readers are asked to publicise the service in their area and/or group, to send information on what their group is doing, and money to Women's Liberation Movement National Information Service, c/o 24 Mexborough Drive, Leeds 7. □

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE UNION BUILDING

A BENEFIT FOR THE RIGHT AGAINST THE ABORTION AMENDMENT

LIVE GROUPS  
DUCKS DELUXE  
THE SILENT SUFFRAGETTES

WEDNESDAY JUNE 4TH 8PM  
TICKETS 40p PHONE 639 2348

TO THE ABORTION BILL  
A PUBLIC MEETING WITH  
PROMINENT SPEAKERS  
ON  
COME AND JOIN THE STRuggle FOR THIS  
DANGEROUS REGRESSIVE PROPOSAL

May 31: South-East London Abortion Campaign march from Deptford to Catford

the street — they suggest the canteen in the lunch hour at a place of work, a social, a community centre; anywhere the issue can be raised with some follow-up. They're a full-time company, so they can perform seven days a week. Contact 11 Acklam Road, London W10 (01-969 9348).

On May 22 doctors in ASTMS occupied the British Medical Association for 24 hours until Derrick Stevenson, the BMA secretary, agreed to make the BMA evidence to the Select Committee available to the press and to refer their other demands to the BMA council.

They are demanding a national petition of doctors against the

demo on June 7, the May Day rally, and the Women's TUC march in London.

There's been a tremendous amount going on in the Midlands. In Nottingham we have regular weekly meetings, but most of us work two or three nights a week on the campaign — the most intensive we've ever been involved in.

We feel really confident and happy about working in NAC. Not since the Family Allowances Campaign have we been able to reach out to so many women and get such a positive response.

## Oxford

We went to see the local MPs at their surgeries: Airey Neave (Tory, anti-White Bill) and Evan

Someone said she'd gone to her doctor prepared to fight for an abortion, but as it had been made so easy she'd changed her mind: "You're not going to take away my baby". Throughout the programme we pushed that we weren't "baby-haters", but felt that only wanted children would be loved and cared for.

## FILM

Women in the Independent Newsreel Collective are making a film of women's struggles over the last four years, focusing on the fight for abortion, particularly on Brighton NAC. To be distributed by The Other Cinema, 12-13 Lt Newport Street, London WC2 (01-734 8508). □



# ABORTION NEWS

## SELECT COMMITTEE GRINDS ON

*In Spare Rib's 32, 34-36 we traced James White's attempt to destroy the 1967 Abortion Act to the point at which the parliamentary select committee was in open session, and numerous trade unions, trade councils and constituency political parties had passed*

*resolutions opposing White's Bill. Then Babies for Burning was exploded in an important article in The Sunday Times published on March 30th. Now read on...*

Every Monday afternoon from four to six, the Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill sits in open session in the House of Commons. A handful of yawning journalists sprawl in the press gallery. The 'public gallery' — one long row of chairs — is packed. The representatives of the pressure groups are in attendance, also one or two from the medical organisations, and sometimes a group of Roman Catholic schoolchildren shepherded by a teacher, intent on learning some of the more esoteric facts of life.

For the first five weeks, half a dozen senior members of the Department of Health have been in the firing line. They sit politely in the witness seats while a florid Tory, Sir Bernard Braine, and three Roman Catholic MPs denounce them for not showing enough enthusiasm for restricting the 1967 Abortion Act. They answer carefully and cautiously, never stepping out of line, never revealing a personal opinion, shielding their ministers from suggestions of neglect. Sir Bernard gnashes his teeth and ruffles his glossy hair in frustration as their impeturbability remains unshaken. With innumerable qualifications they stick to their guns. The wording of the White Bill is imprecise and vague. It will solve few if any problems. It will create others. It flies in the face of the recommendations of the Lane Committee on the Abortion Act,

that sat for three years and concluded that the Act had been of great benefit to women. No, Sir, Bernard, they do not think it would be of great public interest to dismantle the 1967 Act — with the greatest respect, Sir, they do not...

### Lifeline's "Alternatives"

One interesting question the Committee will soon have to consider is Clause 5 (4) of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. This reads as follows: "A person giving to any pregnant woman any advice or information to which this section applies shall at the same time give her advice as to available alternatives to such treatment."

Here is one *Spare Rib* reader's experience with Lifeline, whose advertisements are plastered all over London tube stations, giving the impression it is an organisation that provides disinterested counselling:

I was interested in finding out what they offer in terms of advice, so a few weeks ago I phoned them posing as a pregnant 17 year old. The woman I talked to was Irish and claimed to be a nurse. I told her that I was pregnant, and asked her whether she could arrange me an abortion. I did this because I felt their advertising was very ambiguous... Her first reaction was 'Do you realise the dangers of abortion?' She then gave me information about the dangers of abortion, particularly stressing that it is safer to have a baby than to have an abortion. She talked of terrible infection, sterility and breakdowns. She claimed that since the body is in an unbalanced hormonal state this would be accelerated by a termination and result in terrible depression. I asked her if this happened to every woman who has an abortion and she said it did... I could avoid the shame of pregnancy by leaving my home area... families were available and Life would find me a job...

For providing the accurate and objective "service" described above, Lifeline has obtained the status of a registered charity with all its associated financial advantages. In the weekly newspaper *General Practitioner* journalist Alida Baxter, who has also surveyed these organisations, concluded that her contact with Lifeline would have given her "precious little comfort". She then quotes from the guidelines

issued by Lifeline's parent organisation Life:

"The adviser should be ready, if appropriate and with due care, to explain that abortion kills a fellow human being... If a caller asks for help with obtaining an abortion, Life will not give it. On the contrary, the telephone adviser must use the opportunity to do her utmost in a calm and loving way, to help the caller come to a different decision..."

And much more besides, including a warning never to refer a caller to a doctor or social worker who might be sympathetic to legal abortion. This is in line with the Pastoral Letter entitled 'Human Life is Sacred' issued on May 1 by the Irish Catholic Bishops in which they warn: "Those who advise or arrange abortions for girls and women who consult them, bear as great, if not greater, degree of guilt than the girls and women themselves..."

### 'Faith' Not Tapes

On 25 April, under the heading 'More Faith' Peter Litchfield, one of the authors of *Babies for Burning*, wrote a mournful letter to the *Church of England Newspaper*, which had uncharitably reprinted some of the *Sunday Times*' unflattering remarks about him and his book:

"To accept the *Sunday Times*' findings without even an approach to myself seems to show a singular lack of Christian faith."

He then referred to the 35-40 hours of tape that was being made available to the Select Committee as evidence of malpractice in the private sector. The most exciting of these tapes had been made available to his admirer, Mr Leo Abse MP, some weeks ago. Mr Abse's conclusions were naturally awaited with bated breath. They were as follows: "... the tape... was too indistinct for me to make out" (*Sunday Times* 30 March).

Rumours are now rife that MPs will be offered typed transcripts in place of these somewhat unsatisfactory tapes. If any MP then wishes to hear any section of the transcript played over to him, the authors will be pleased to oblige — provided that particular bit of tape can be located, is in sufficiently good condition to be heard, etc. etc. This is not of course to suggest for one moment that in the end MPs will only read or hear those

out-of-context extracts that the authors wish them to read or hear. Far from it.

Nonetheless, it might be thought appropriate in many quarters, in view of the *Sunday Times* revelations, if the Rt. Hon. Fred Willey MP, chairman of the Select Committee, let Scotland Yard tape experts take a close look at the tapes and write a report on them, on where the breaks and joins occur, on the bits that cannot be heard sufficiently clearly to be made sense of, and so forth.

In *The Times* on May 1st, Lady Brook and Caroline Woodroffe of the Brook Advisory Centres made the interesting revelation that "the recorder was accidentally switched off by the investigators during their counselling interview at Brook with Pauline Crabbe." As Mrs Pauline Crabbe JP is one of the most experienced and distinguished youth counsellors in the country, this accident may not cause too much surprise. Indeed, the tapes that are not available are every bit as significant as the tapes that are. Mr Willey please note. □

Liz Warren

## WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

The first London march for Wages for Housework took place on May 3, coinciding with similar demonstrations in Italy, Canada and the United States.

The women were marching to underline and protest the vast amounts of work that women do, for no pay inside the home and for low pay outside it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was presented with a bill itemising this work, the profits derived from it, and demanding the wages due.

Early on the police tried to prevent leaflet distribution by threatening arrest for obstruction if anyone walked on the pavement to hand out leaflets.

The march made its own impact though. The clanging of pots and pans, the chanting of slogans — "We want five pounds more, every time we mop the floor!" — and the colourful banners aroused enough curiosity and seriously interested response amongst passers-by that many came to the kerbside to help themselves to the leaflets. More information from *Power of Women Collective*, 64 Larch Road, London NW2. □



# Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

## RAP Group

Dear Friends,  
Several of us in London are considering starting a RAP (Radical Alternatives to Prison) Women and Crime group, which would formulate policy, write documents and campaign on issues such as prostitution and rape. We would like to start the group off with a short series of discussions on relevant topics with guest speakers. From there on the group would find its own direction.

If you would be interested in becoming part of such a group, please let the RAP office know. If you have any ideas for speakers or topics for the group, let us know about them as well.

The group, to begin around September, would be London based. But if you are keen or have something to contribute but live outside London, get in touch anyway. It might be beneficial to keep up contact with people who are interested but unable to attend meetings.

Look forward to hearing from you.  
Gail Coles  
Liz Middleton  
Radical Alternatives to Prison  
Eastbourne House  
Bullards Place  
London E2

## Isolation in Scotland

Help, I'm stranded in the borders of Scotland (about 36 miles south of Edinburgh) with seemingly no one who thinks like I do. I would like to know whether there is some group of organised women nearby with whom I can talk, share my hopes for working (I do a range of things from sensual massage to deep connective tissue massage) and what to do with my eight-months-old son so we aren't trapped in this house all day long and end up hating each other. Any information you can send me I will appreciate.

Thank you  
Chris Garcia  
7 Abbotsford Terrace  
Dormock  
Melrose  
Roxboroughshire  
Scotland

\* We don't have any group listed in Roxboroughshire, but by printing your letter we hope that anyone who feels similarly isolated and lives in that area will contact you. Meanwhile an address that may help: Scottish Women's Liberation Centre, 4 Fleming Place, St Andrews, Fife (monthly publication, 15p) which is also the address of the Scottish Women's Newsletter.

## Childbirth

I am pregnant and wish to obtain information on books which give unbiased information on pregnancy, childbirth and care of children. I would be grateful if you could let me have details.

Yours sincerely  
Pat Ibbotson  
Disley Cheshire

*Our Bodies Ourselves\** by the Boston Women's Health Collective has a long chapter on Childbirth, full of practical information, advice, and descriptions of experiences by different women. *The New Childbirth* by Erna Wright is a useful book if you wish to prepare yourself for natural childbirth (Tandem). The Swansea Women and Health group have produced a pamphlet called *Having Your Baby*, which is a comprehensive self help account, full of pictures and with an extensive glossary of medical terms. 5p plus postage from 53 Bryn Road Swansea. If you want to register for natural childbirth classes you should get in touch with your local branch of the National Childbirth Trust. You can find out the address from the National Childbirth Trust 9 Queensborough Terrace London W2 3TB. They can also provide information about the different approaches to natural childbirth (Lamaze, Leboyer etc), breastfeeding and the care of children.

\* Obtainable from Compendium  
240 Camden High Street London  
NW1

## Midwifery

In reply to my query (issue 34) you said it was necessary to do three years nursing and one further before qualifying as a midwife.

There is another way. On 1st April I started the Central Midwives Board two years course for people without nursing experience, which leads to the same qualification, state certified midwife.

I'll gladly pass on the details to anyone who gets in touch with me and am still interested in hearing from people in similar situations.

Could you tell me when and by whom the book by Le Boyer about his methods is being published in English?

Love  
Chris Mather  
14 Hillrise Road  
London N19

\* Le Boyer's book is being published by Wildwood House, but not until the autumn.

## Sex Education for Boys

Can you help me by recommending some books or leaflets that would help me to explain all about sex, contraception, and bodily changes likely to be encountered by my son as he grows up. He is now almost eleven years old, and as I have been divorced since he was four, I have no man to give me advice. I find that I am quite ignorant about what happens to boys as they get older.

Many thanks  
Margaret Duffy  
South Humberside

\* The Children's Rights Workshop recommend a book called *Boy Girl Man Woman* by Bent Claesson (published by Calder and Boyars, and also in paperback). It is frank and explicit and contains detailed pictures. *Learning to Live with Sex*

was also recommended to me. This is aimed specifically at teenagers and is also detailed and direct. It is published by the Family Planning Association, and is obtainable from the FPA bookshop, 27 Mortimer Street, London W1, price 25p plus postage.

## Women and the Law

I wonder if you could send me the address of any organisation interested in women and the law, particularly relating to contraception amongst married women.

I am a final year medical student and have recently heard that IUCDs can only be fitted with the husband's consent. I am interested to know whether in fact this is custom or legal requirement or simply hearsay.  
Yours faithfully  
Sylvia Chandler

\* To answer the second part of your letter first, I'll quote from Anna Coote and Tess Gill's book *Women's Rights: A Practical Guide*. In relation to husband's consent "It is still the policy of most clinics to ask for your husband's consent if you are having a coil fitted or an operation for sterilisation. Their excuse is that the doctor must be protected from being sued by an irate husband who might demand compensation for loss of his ability to have children." Early in 1973 Lord Aberdare . . . stated: "There is no legal requirement either under English or Scottish law that the consent of the spouse must be obtained for the sterilisation of the partner." I assume this applies to the fitting of coils too.

The Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign, started in 1972 are particularly concerned with a woman's right to control what happens to her body. Their demands are the right to choose the following:

- 1) Free, safe and reliable contraception available to every woman on the National Health Service.
- 2) Abortion - a woman's right to choose; any woman who is unwilling to continue her pregnancy should have the undisputed right to a free and safe abortion.
- 3) No forced sterilisation; pressure should not be put on any woman to accept sterilisation as a condition for abortion.

Your local group can be contacted c/o Angela Lloyd, 27 Prospect Road, Birmingham 13.

## Self Help Herbs

After reading an article entitled "Self Help Herbs" in your edition No. 34, I began thinking where on earth here in London one could find herbs growing in dry fields, woods, marshes etc. I'd be really grateful if you could write and let me know of any places where I can obtain these, or if not if it's possible to buy seeds to grow oneself. I feel I've been completely converted to herbal medicine in one afternoon.

Yours sincerely  
Isobel Jacobs  
Twickenham

\* Probably the best collection of all the herbs you can think of can be found at the Haelan Centre, 39 Park Road, Crouch End, London N8. They can also provide some advice on ailments.

## Bisexuality

Dr Charlotte Wolff is in the process of preparing an extensive study of bisexuality. She would greatly appreciate if women or men who consider themselves to be bisexual would contact her via the Albany Trust, 31 Clapham Road, SW9. She would get in touch with them to arrange interviews.

## Info Centre

I am very struck by the need for a resource centre/info exchange/pressure group for feminists in the North East. There seems to be a lack of anybody to which women could apply for information and help about everything related to childbearing and childcare, wife and motherhood, or which at least could refer women to sources of specific help.

For instance it would be so good if women could find out about something like home childbirth, and all the organisation that must be done beforehand, from a feminist point of view, and from people with knowledge and experience of particular Health Authorities. A register of information on all child-care facilities in an area, and of fellow feminists who would help out on all sorts of occasions would be very useful to the whole movement in the North East. It would be a source of help and advice on establishing women's groups, refuges, organising campaigns, coping with prison sentences, strikes, unemployment, victimisation etc, and would provide the basis for pressure groups to act in an informed way for specific reforms.

If there is such a set up here I'd like to help somehow, or if not, maybe other interested people could contact me and we could get something together along these lines.  
Yours sincerely  
Sarah Murison  
47 West Hill  
Durham City

\* A conference was held in Leeds on May 17th to discuss the setting up of a national information centre that would also publish a newsletter. It was decided that this information centre should operate from Leeds, but it won't be for a while because of lack of funds to pay people. If anyone is interested in sending in information, or has any suggestions, they can contact Alison, 4 Hilton Road, Leeds 8.

However this is specifically an information centre and it is national, and would be unable to fulfil adequately particular local needs or act as a pressure group in the way you describe. Hopefully your letter will provide an incentive for people with similar concerns about the North East to contact you. □



# Exercise in Trust

Patricia Wright (Penny) and Anne Severson (Anne) met in the United States last summer, and began the project of therapy which is continued in this correspondence. Anne gave Penny a list of topics to use as a guide to exploring her emotions and memories. In the last section of the correspondence, (*Spare Rib* Issue 36), Penny dealt at length with her feelings about groups she had been involved with when she was young.

Penny's material is written in journal form with dated entries, and posted in batches to Anne, who then responds to each batch with a single letter. To get a clearer overall picture of this Exercise in Trust, of Penny's self-exploration with Anne's help and prompting, we suggest that new readers get hold of the previous sections in Issues 35 and 36.

## Oct. 9

Anne,  
It's late, I'm tired, I'm not getting enough sleep, or walking, or writing. I did write a couple of poems last weekend, don't know if it's necessary to send those along to you, Anne, let me know what you think. All my dreams of order seem to be crumbling. I mean an ordered existence. I've kept going to the Women's Press things. Almost stopped but went over to do some typing I said I'd do, had a really nice talk with one of the women that made me feel so gratified and human I changed my mind. But that was one to one. The meetings aren't so excruciating now, but Jesus they take so much time. I'm having trouble keeping up with my classes, spending almost no time at home or on my own little projects.



## Oct. 13

O.K. I think I finished with *groups involved with*, on the list. Now *shames, blames*. I assume in relation to groups, or other people, those words have to do with other people, without other people there's neither. Ashamed of being clumsy, socially, physically, ashamed of being slow, ashamed of gross physical habits — nose picking, pimple squeezing, farting, belching. Yetch. Ashamed even of parts of my body that aren't behaviour but aren't what they're supposed to be — thick ankles, stray black hairs on my belly and breasts. All shame has in common "what will they think, what will they think, will they hold me in such contempt as to say, think, nothing at all of me, beneath contempt". That's where blame is. When I'm not blaming myself for being so contemptible I'm blaming other people for not recognizing my worth. I see past their clumsiness, stupidity, vanity, damn it, why don't they see past mine. I'm nice too, like anyone who is nice to me, why don't they like me, even if I'm awkward at first, if I am nice to them? Unless they are too weak, timid, vulnerable, and not charmingly, tastelessly pathetic like Richie, like Alberta. Like me, fuck it. That's it. I feel like a creep. I blame whatever it is that makes me so ashamed of myself.

Patricia Wright



Lise Folkman

Anne Severson



Patricia Wright

Call it self pity if you want to, you and your damned power that never seems to fail you. I don't think it is. I don't feel sorry for myself, I feel disgusted. At this fault line in myself. When I bought the plywood for my desk top the man showed me how the veneer sometimes covers whole gone places in the next layer of ply, pockets of nothing. That's how I feel I am sometimes, like there are layers of real worth and strength and ability in me but anytime I can punch through to free floating fear. And I blame whatever triggers that, I not only blame it, I hate it. Or them. Or her. I think that's why I feel rushes of hostility for you, Anne, you, just the idea of you in my mind as I work shows me the holes. I don't seem to hate my mother any more.

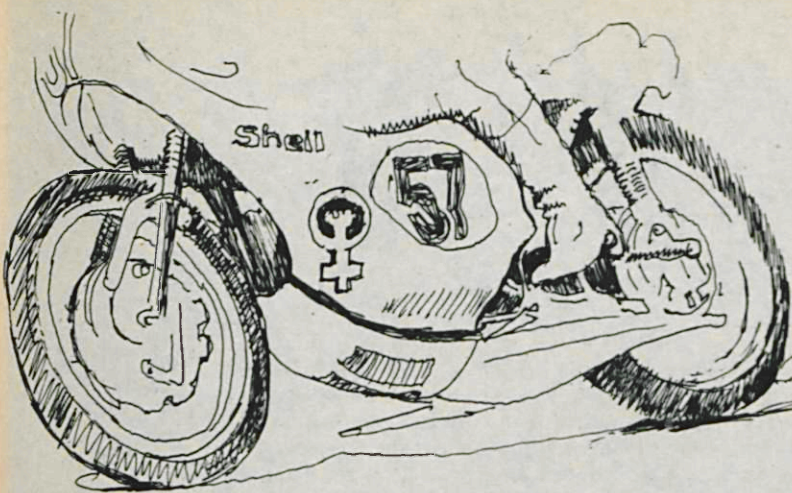
I looked at the list. It says *What do I blame?* What do I blame? When I'm into blaming I blame my unhappy childhood, my insensitive parents — out-of-it father, pushy mother — cruel better-loved-than-I sister, mostly-stupid teachers, friends who didn't love me enough, friends/lovers who loved me too much, too tight, too close, too possessively. I blame the world, our society for being so snobby, not valuing quiet sensitive people like me, valuing aggressive, flashy people — like you, I thought it, why edit. Blame the world for being smeared with blood and viciousness, blame myself for not being able to get in and pitch, dig, throw, smear with the rest. Out of fear, not just trembling, not just morals, babe, but fear. Can't cut it, can't cope, can't compete. Mostly I blame myself.

## Oct. 24

Hi. I've been a mess, bouncing off the walls. That whole thing of trying to work with Women's Press was incredibly anxiety-producing for me. For about a week and a half after I last tried to write something, I spent a lot of time on it, while the issue was getting ready to go to press. I felt some commitment to stay with it that long. I still felt so uncomfortable, Anne, and finally exhausted too, the last night the paper was being laid out, so anxious and feeling put down. You know a funny thing, or it seems funny to me: the least friendly women in and around that group are the lesbians. I don't know how aware they are I'm gay. I certainly haven't tried to hide it, have talked about it with the one woman there I connected with much at all, and there were some sort of sapphic references in one of the poems I submitted to them before I started to work there. So I don't know if it's that they realize I'm gay and find me too conservative — there were some things about that with Judy Fell



that I don't think I mentioned — just little oblique disapproving references — like my watch being “femmy”. O god. Or maybe I just don't appeal to them, I mean as a person. I'm certainly not a very good mixer, that's for sure.



I had planned to try and do a little work tonight but it's late and I don't think I'll start. Next thing on the list is *in groups what situations/problems do I encounter* and I'm really ready to deal with that one now. I'm pleased I wrote a little tonight to catch up, loosen up. I think I'm going to do better now.

Oh one more thing before I stop. Did I tell you I'm taking a yoga class? Really, my classes are wonderful, modern art, northern renaissance art, and introduction to music class, and yoga. I'm learning so much from all of them. The yoga is, well just much heavier than I expected. I don't feel I'm doing very well, but I'm learning a great deal about how much work I have to do on my mindbody. So tense, so noisy.

## Oct. 27

You know, I'm having a hell of a difficult fall. I know my last word from you was to be grateful and I know I have a lot to be grateful for but I don't seem to have access to my happiness an awful lot of the time. I cried more this weekend than I think I ever have in one small stretch.

I've never been able to manage with people but I've sort of managed to interpret it in my favour, or at least neutral. Now I feel like a failure, not a resigned failure with contented times any more, struggling. There was a woman's weekend on campus this weekend. I tried to force myself to go to some of the things that I was attracted to — bicycle repair, poetry reading — tonight. I couldn't force myself, I couldn't face it. I couldn't face knowing there'd be women there from Women's Press. It would have been easier at least to go if I'd thought it would be all strangers. Yes, because then I could have trotted up that damned dangerous illusion about the warmth and love of woman-oriented women. I'm getting kind of mad about that. I saw a flyer for the Women's Center the other day that actually said “Love and Sisterhood”. What bullshit. None of the women I met who were involved with the damned Women's Center would even smile at me. I don't know why I believed propaganda from the women's movement. I always saw through the anti-war movement, and other left groups I could support politically without buying the line that the participants were a whole new kind of human being. But to be an even less pleasant kind of human being than before is really depressing. Most men are friendlier to me than most of the women I've met lately, and that's dreary. I'm ranting, I know. I just feel so left out, so clumsy and surprised. (Not surprised at all, don't know why I said that.) So I suppose it's a good time to try to start dealing with *situations and problems I encounter in groups*. The not being able to talk is the main thing. Then I feel terribly self-conscious because I'm not talking, if I think people are noticing, and terribly hurt and alone-feeling if they're not noticing.

I think they should be aware of how worthwhile I am. I think they should notice how pretty I am. That's something else. I have a real tendency to relate to people sexually, I mean to respond to them sexually. I see them in terms of their attractiveness or unattractive-

ness to me, especially when I'm not comfortable. If I am comfortable I usually only notice attractiveness and then only sort of peripherally unless it's overwhelming, which is rare. But if not comfortable, I'm intensely aware, distractingly so. And I find myself using it as a mental weapon against someone I feel doesn't like me — “What do you know, you ugly person, ugly bitch” — depending on how agitated I am. My, I am hostile tonight.

Now, from the list, *why is it a crime?* I've been resisting that question. Because I kept thinking only of *why isn't it*. “Of course it isn't”, my liberal forebrain kept saying. Not a *crime* to be comfortable with people, for christ's sake, it's a *problem*, more to be pitied than censured, after all. Oh there is selfpity down there, isn't there, damn it. But now I see that there's a level on which I do think it's a crime, I think it, not just think “others might think it but you know what il-liberal bastards others are”. I think it's a crime to be so unreal. To always be so self-conscious and plotting and planning and thinking and writing things over and over AND PRETENDING THAT YOU DIDN'T. (No, I haven't done that with the journal material but with almost every other thing I write, especially letters, I do.) It's fakery, fakery, fakery and I think it's criminally insane not to be able to just let go, and go — but I can't, Anne, I can't. Be my real self and nobody can stand me. Be a phony and not only can nobody stand me, I can't stand myself. But I'm so lonely. I've been trying to walk a thin wire so long, trying to stand up and walk on through the sane centre of those extremes, and that wasn't working either. The only thing that seems to make sense now is to try to be whole alone.

Sitting and thinking about how it would be if I could just love, just give love away; what would happen. When I think about you writing “why not let go?” — you see that stuck and stung — I've thought several times, “well, what would have happened if I'd ‘let go’ with you? You wouldn't have liked that, would you?” I thought. But now I think, actually, that to quite an extent I did let go, was as honest as I could be with you, about everything I was feeling about you, as I was about other things. And felt a great regard for what you would want, and could be, with me. That's fine, isn't it. The love finds its own level, like water. Like water!

## Oct. 28

I looked at the list for inspiration. *How do I handle it*, it says. Well I handle it by not handling it. I'm frozen, I said, dammit that is the problem, not being able to cope with problems, not being able to communicate with people. I sit and say nothing, I try to maintain a low profile, I say nothing, I smile compulsively if anyone looks at me or sometimes I won't meet people's eyes, I look away, I pretend I don't see them, don't know them, don't notice them, if we pass on the street. “Why hold back any longer?” you said. Why not? I hate rejection, hate it, hate it. I hate offering my love and it not being wanted. But every time I think or say or write that, I think: “But it isn't your love you're offering, it's your need.”

Well, *What problem am I trying to solve?* This is a funny list, they're all the same question. Or maybe it's just me, I answer too much at once so it's all the same answer over and over. I'm trying to solve the problem of not feeling loved, not being able to be intimate with people, going to extremes of being completely frozen and detached or too attached: then demanding if I think the person doesn't love as much as I do, and bored if I think they love more. I think that last is because I doubt the worth of a person who'd value me very much, and assume that a person who's not interested in me is discriminating. It can be the same person at different times, my esteem for them tends to rise and fall obversely with theirs for me. On a casual level I like anyone who's nice to me.

## Nov. 1

Most mornings foggy now, sky made manifest and settling down in our hills, sifting down through the trees, those chill killer nights dissolving into mild grey winter. I love this town, Eugene. I've been reading books of poems I've had around for years, discovering T.S. Eliot and Muriel Rukeyser. I'm talking about the last month now,



not tonight! Tonight I washed and dried lettuce and spinach leaves, ate supper and cleaned the kitchen, and balanced my checkbook. I had never known those poets were visionaries. I feel slow, taking so many years to learn such simple things, like how to try to read and see and hear and think and not think — not even to learn the things, but to *try*, just begin to learn what is to be learned, by me, if I'm to feel effectively alive. I mean that's pretty basic to begin glimpsing only now. However, I also seem to begin to have more time.

People were nicer to me today. I was nicer to them too.

## Nov. 11

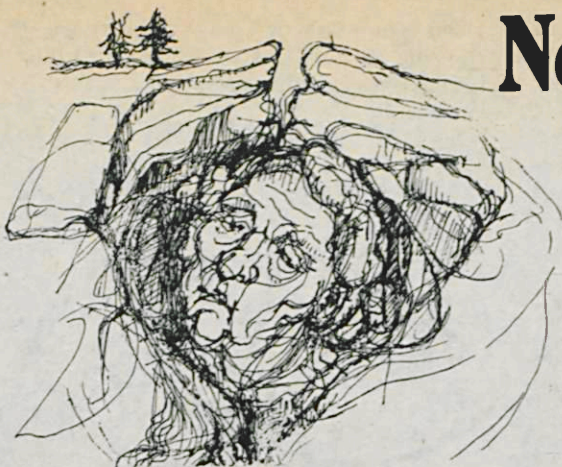
Well, now I see why I've been avoiding writing. Besides being busy studying for midterms, not to much avail I might add. But my practical reasons for not writing are like the germ of truth in every paranoia, that much and not much more. I see why else when I look at the list, not having anything too pressing to write about on my own — no poetry's coming at all these days — and see *Write your sexual autobiography*. I haven't been looking forward to that. It isn't that I'm embarrassed, exactly — at least not for the conventional reasons. It's that there's so embarrassingly little to be embarrassed about. I've led and now lead more than ever a pretty asexual existence. Occasionally autosexual, but that's about it.

Really I think I've told you in one context or another about every sexual relationship I've had. I don't especially feel like going over those relationships again, at least in the ways I have. I'm sure the best thing to do is try to return and bring up everything that suggests itself to me as sexual whether I see why it does or not.

At about six or seven, in the summer, when my parents were going around fairly bare, I mean daddy without shirts, mother in those sleeveless housedresses like the one of your mother's you wore last summer, Anne, being aware of the difference in their arms, his so much bigger and bumpier and hairier — say, I just remembered how I like forearms, I wonder if that's when I started getting off on them? Hairier, I was going to say, at least on the lower arm — and that's still a part of men I like best, nice strong hands and well shaped forearms with nice hair. And mother's was very smooth and shapely, especially the upper part, and she had lovely hands too. My hands are something like hers, though I like mine better, I believe. Good thing! I asked why they were so different, mother said it was because men and women were different. Both so pleasing in their way, (she didn't say that, I did. I remember no feeling of judgement then). A little bit, about the same time, playing doctor with my plastic stethoscope — yellow from the red plastic bag — with my shirtless daddy with the rather thin chest hair. I didn't like the hairs around his nipples too well, they seemed rather too long and lonely. So do mine. Mother, on the other hand, sometimes took baths with me still then. I wonder, does she remember that now and does she regret it? She was beautiful. Thinking that, thinking about being in the tub with mother, I small and fat and mobile, I wish to nurse her. Fool that I was, small and fat and mobile, I probably could have gotten away with it then. (She is a little afraid of me now. What was it that happened at home this summer? Damn. What was that? Something when I hugged her once. She said something about wondering if it felt different, if her breasts felt different, or rather breast. The foam rubber one. I pulled back and said, Oh, I didn't notice anything at all, and sort of patted her on the chest and a little flicker went across her face and she sort of swatted at my hand.)

My first lover, Barbara, told me hair-raising stories about sex play in her childhood. I can't remember anything like that. Oh yes. One time, Mrs Poston's son Gerry whom I loved so much, and I, in what seems in my mind to be an outhouse though I don't think either of our farms had them — anyway in a constricted space one afternoon — compared parts. I'm trying to pull it up. He looked little and smooth-bellied and sort of pudgy-sausage-penis, like little boys do. Must not have been the first one I'd seen, because it doesn't feel shocked or surprised. I don't think I thought it was awful, but I didn't think it was pretty either. But now, sitting here trying to be there, fellatio thoughts cross my mind. Maybe I just miss sausage.

## Nov. 13



This morning before I woke up I was above Hell's Canyon, which I've never seen, and it was beautiful, a sheer convoluted shell of a gorge, down and down and around and around. My grandmother was somehow involved, somehow she was very serene and wise, more than we, condescending, ever let her be: I was glad she died not knowing I was a lesbian, I didn't think she could take it. I bet she knew. She knew in the dream. Nobody was missing and we were walking to the edge of the center of the world, where the world curled around itself in a great whorling crown. It was very early in the morning. Then, I walked away and there was a bathroom with a shower and no wall, and Daddy showering, getting out of the shower. Do you remember I told you last summer, when I was writing about penis dreams, about seeing him getting out of the shower, violently red? The dream wasn't so dramatic, I was aware only that he seemed pale and white, Daddy's body always has violent contrasts of colour from working in the fields with no shirt and always pants. White, white legs he has, deep, deep brown face and arms, but in the dream pale all over, and I saw that his body has gotten old, like mother's. In truth it's getting baggy but not thin, but in the dream, thin. And in the dream I saw that he was embarrassed and ashamed. I think he said something to me, something about embarrassment, but I can't bring it back now. I woke up, and I thought, dream, I am in the dream, I am Daddy, I am ashamed of my body, I am ashamed, I am ashamed, I don't like my body. I think now that my liking of it is as though it were someone else's, I like it *objectively*, not subjectively. It somehow seems related to not thinking anyone who could like me could be very cool.

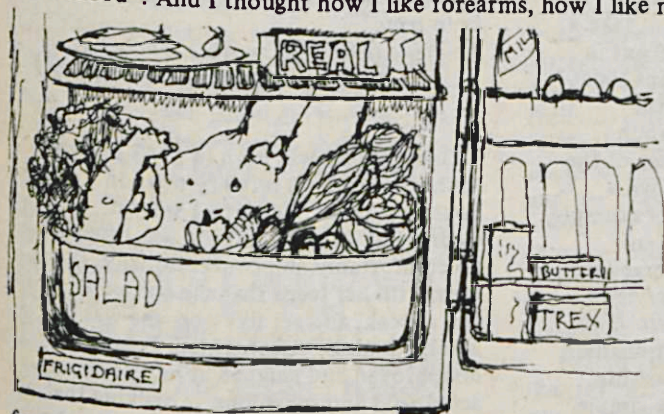
Oh, I just remembered, taking that sheet out of the machine and thinking I would stop. I remembered as I finished talking about the dream I said I thought I was Daddy hating my body, stronger word comes now. I didn't think at the time but thought when writing now, I'm also the canyon, then, the great whorled cleft.

I feel sorta baffled. It got late while I did the studying I promised myself I'd do before I wrote a note to you, Anne, and did a bit of writing before bed. Lot of things have been rolling around all evening that I was anxious to get to but one thing I'd better do for sure is the dream about Andrew — one of the most repulsive boys in my whole high school class. Fat, red-haired, not too bright and with an unpleasant personality. I really did not like Andrew. That's who I had an erotic dream about. I can't remember having had for years, if ever, a dream about starting to copulate with a man, as opposed to those dreams about giant bamboo sprouts and so on. This had an odd feature, besides the general oddness of the situation, that kept coming to mind over the weekend. Andrew was preparing to mount me in the missionary position — he was pudgy, and as I thought that just now it occurred to me I wrote something like that about Gerry a while ago — pudgy. The odd thing, I grasped his penis and it expanded in my hand, not in the usual way but very much larger at the end — something like an umbrella, if it were blunt — that's not a good description but I was very distinctly aware of something like separate ribs, expanding, expanding. I think now I probably over-estimate the size of a penis at whatever level I think of it. This is embarrassing me to write about and my hands feel quite stiff typing clear up to the elbows. Over-estimate — I am afraid I would be hurt. I don't like to be entered, usually, even by a woman I love. Something will tear. I realized that something I'd always tried in an oily way to pretend was an unpleasant memory — a time I made Barbara bleed bright, bright red blood all up my wrist — was really a pleasant memory. I-was-here, bloody graffiti.



I'll continue my Andrew programme of talking first about the things that make me uncomfortable and be done with them. Glancing at my list, the most difficult thing is hostile thoughts after masturbating. Both hostile thoughts and masturbating embarrass me somewhat. But together! Last night when I went to bed it seemed it would be a good idea, and I always do masturbate if it occurs to me to do so. (It never does while grocery shopping or at the office so I figure why not trust myself.) So I did, and it was pleasant — I read once that stereo-headphones lend a sort of synthetic grandeur to music, which they do, and I think masturbation's kind of the same way. No distractions or anxieties — at least no inter-personal ones — but a sort of sterile run-through. Well, afterwards I felt, you know, nice but sort of conscious of being alone, a little sad, sort of aware of the ridiculousness of the whole thing. I was thinking while I was drowsing off whether that could be shame or loneliness or both — I've felt it on occasion after making love with a person too. Of course you can feel lonely after making love with a person. It can be a desperate way of lying. At the place where awake thoughts start swaying and weaving and waving with dream images I was conscious that the dream images were coming up sort of hostile — I think there were two or three, but only one comes now because it startled me a little awake; something with a woman; we were standing, talking, somehow there was sexual energy between us, then one of us opened the door of a freezer and that was where I'd put her little boy. Aha. I'm the little boy. O.K. smartass.

I'd been writing about Andrew and his penis — about my forearms stiffening with embarrassment, right up to the elbows, then about the time I made Barbara bleed. I suppose you saw the connection between all those things when you read it but I didn't, I thought I thought of her bleeding because I was afraid of bleeding myself; when I thought of this last night when I was supposed to be meditating, I remembered that what had been in my mind was bright red blood all up my forearm, to my elbow, and I didn't write that because I stopped and thought, "that couldn't be, there wasn't that much blood". And I thought how I like forearms, how I like my



forearms, admire their fine long strong shapes, as proud as any man of his cock; I think I wrote before how I liked my brother-in-law's forearms and hands when he was a young man, when he first married my sister and I'm sure I saw him in no other way but sexually — his shapely forearms, fine male wrists and hands and just the right thickness of hair.

## Dec.4

Dear Anne, I want to write a little while, babble a little while before I go to work tonight. Hearing from you has my mind all frothy. Let's pour some out. I want also to work through, if I can, your suggestion for exercise: *make no excuses, justifications, explanations for acts or thoughts.*

I know when your letters are coming. (Sometimes, couple of times now. Small sample! Send more, let's be scientific about this.) I don't let myself get too carried away with this tiny clairvoyance. I had decided this time, particularly when a week elapsed between postcard and letter, that perhaps you were having trouble finding words to tell me my poem for you had so moved you you'd discovered you're really in love with me too. I'm afraid as far as romanticism goes, Anne, I'm really incorrigible.

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" I thought as demurely as possible when I read your suggestion about acting macho with toilet paper in crotch. Liked the idea of course. Will try. I've been looking at boys with long, long hair and thinking, how can they put up with it, but of course they must feel their hair long and slinky, I must feel mine

cropped and free. (Free equals male there. Hmmm.) Well, caution to the winds, stomp on.

I've tried to think about the extent to which I write for you, write differently than I would for myself alone. I'm sure my sense of your eyes is a factor, but I don't think it's too strong. I think the main difference is that I write at all, might well let it go completely if not for your encouragement and occasional sting. Seem to have reached a place where I can be as honest with you as I can be with myself, with some lag of course and sometimes some difficulty. You cut through so much bullshit immediately. Would love to feel this way with other people. Which reminds me of the only other thing that was on my mind apropos your letter. Because of time lag — your references to Women's Press which I gave up on, reminds me not unpleasantly of the up-and-down-ness of this fall. Strong desire to explain, justify, even apologize! Hoping you aren't disappointed. It doesn't seem to me that not forcing myself to continue with Women's Press was a mistake, but the desire to explain and justify makes me cautious. What do you think?

I appreciate you answering when I ask you directly for your opinion, by the way, which you've pretty consistently done — at least I haven't felt unanswered about anything important yet. Thanks, Anne. Love you.

Penny

## Dec.28

Dear Penny,

I am in Knokke, Belgium, at a big film festival — so far only so-so, I'm afraid, and my film is being shown out of competition so no prize money portends.

I know you won't get this for New Year's Eve but here's a simple and, I hope, fruitful New Year's event that I think you should do. Write out all your grievances on separate pieces of paper — spend a day jotting them down — get it all. Towards midnight burn them, one at a time, read them out loud and as they go up in smoke let them go. I'll be doing this myself. In fact, almost everything I suggest you do is something I am doing or have done myself.

— Oct. 13: "Call it selfpity if you like, you and your damn power that never seems to fail you." I'm afraid power can always fail you — that's why it isn't enough. It's nice to have a lot though, anyway. There is a kind of power under the power that will support you when the conventional forms of strength — security, etc. — fail. I think it must be self-love.

— The end of Oct. 27: you talk about "walking a thin wire so long". On first reading I really flashed on that image. I would like you to do some work on it. First get strong visuals — high wire act, stretched between two cliffs? What is it? Do it like the dream gestalt trip if necessary. What we want to find out is what the ground under the wire is, so you can let it down and walk on the plane with the rest of the mortals. Dare to be ordinary.

Last paragraph in Oct. 28: the notion of "offering love", and then what? Waiting anxiously to see if the recipient unwraps the present? And do they like it? Etc., etc. Now, the trick is, I think, that it ain't no present. It's just there. You must love who you're with. Love what you're doing. And finally, love where you are — that's the tough one because it's "where" in every sense of the word.

Hope the exercise of not giving explanations or justifications proved interesting — the points, I think that excuses or whatever crop up in response to an inner conflict, the use, to uncover the conflict — this in reply to your quitting the Women's Press. The group work is still incomplete, I feel. What crime against what group?

I am tempted to go on a bit about romanticism — seems like it is always a bummer. That is, what is loved is projection, and perhaps in being so is not accepted and loved as *part of the self*. It seems that in good marriages that I know the two people involved are distinctly and knowledgeably different. Friends of mine from Buffalo are here now, and I watch them closely to see what their good marriage is made of. There seems to be a great deal of *respect* — funny word. Very old-fashioned. None of this encounter stuff about giving someone else permission to be — but just respect. Can't beat that solid old stuff sometimes — courtesy is another important one.

Now I'm going out to be polite to everyone gathered here for the festival — Ha! Notice that "polite" and "courteous" are nowhere near the same. Love.

Anne



















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Education Company  
Methuen Young Drama, 95p.

With a long, informative introduction by Eileen Murphy, one of the Bolton group who wrote and performed the play, this book makes available one example of the many plays about women and society which are being put together by groups all over the country. Theatre in Education is 'a group of actors, in character, and a group of children (or young people or adults) exploring and living through a situation in which they are physically and emotionally involved.' In practice this means a very flexible working arrangement, in which the actors/teachers work on scripted and improvised material in anything from one-off sessions, to regular visits to a school over a period of weeks or a term. Eileen Murphy describes one such programme, called 'Poverty Knocks', a history programme in three parts, which involved a combination of visits from the company and project work by the teacher, on the subject of conditions of life among the working class in Bolton in the 1830s, and an exploration of Chartist activity in the town. Most local theatres now have theatre in education companies attached to them, and they perform an important function in cross-fertilising the relationship between drama (art) and history and experience (reality).

Many of the otherwise speculative discussions about 'identification' and 'involvement' in whether characters and situations are 'real' or not, take on a concrete dimension when an otherwise passive 'audience' takes a real part in the building up of a play. Eileen Murphy stresses the need to 'work on two levels, so that they (children) can enter fully into a situation while being quite clear in the back of their minds that it is not true.'

'Sweetie Pie' was the first departure the group had made from this method of working. They decided to write a script themselves

because of the range of presentation and argument they wanted to cover – and particularly to tie the play in clearly to the (then) four demands made by the Women's Movement – equal pay, equal education and opportunity, nurseries and free contraception and abortion.

The play's aims are similar to those of the Red Ladder group's play on women and the London Women's Theatre Group play 'My mother says . . .', and it follows a similar propaganda/demonstration pattern, based on the objective oppressions and problems to which working class women are subject. The link figure is one Mr Cash, who starts by reading a fairy story to Margaret (Sweetie Pie), and who punctuates the action throughout, like some secular Mephistopheles, offering women's magazines, models of the ideal husband, the ideal motherhood, the media image of a sexy wife. Margaret meanwhile lives out her real expectations and possibilities by leaving school at 16, marrying and having a young family. At first very hostile to her husband Bob's union activities, when she is forced to go out to work to keep the family going, she begins to understand the need to organise, and she begins to fight for equal pay.

When a local rent strike is organised, it is Margaret's turn to lead Bob in militancy through her greater understanding of the issues involved. Her attitude to sex and contraception undergo a change as a result of her accidentally becoming pregnant a second time; early in the play she has a conventional attitude to sex (saving it for marriage and children) but this alters. Her attempts to get an abortion meet with violent medical opposition and she finds out too late about the Pregnancy Advisory Service. This is the last straw and she tears the story book out of Mr Cash's hands, insisting that her name is Margaret and not Sweetie Pie. Her growing feminist consciousness breaks the structure of the play and indicates her potential as a woman to act against the structures which contain her.

The play is essentially a demonstration piece, raising all the general questions about women's oppression in and outside the home. Ironically (since the play was initially planned for sixth forms) it says least about educational and job inequalities; it is

particularly strong throughout in emphasising the power of the media in reinforcing and perpetuating sexist ideology – there is a poignant scene in which Margaret strips her blouse off in an effort to be sexy for Bob (in response to advice on the radio about how to please your husband). This kind of scene, which has a specific message to put across, is interwoven with more realistic and recognisable scenes as Margaret moves through the ten years spanned in the play (such as a scene where a neighbour provides second-hand baby clothes).

The play offers no overall analysis of the roots of women's oppression, and in this it still retains one aspect of the openness of the theatre in education method; by leaving it open to discussion at the end, any group using the play can encourage analysis as a process following on the presentation of evidence within the play itself. As a general introduction via theatre to such a discussion of women's oppression, it might also act as an impetus for people to develop some of the ideas in it into their own plays. □

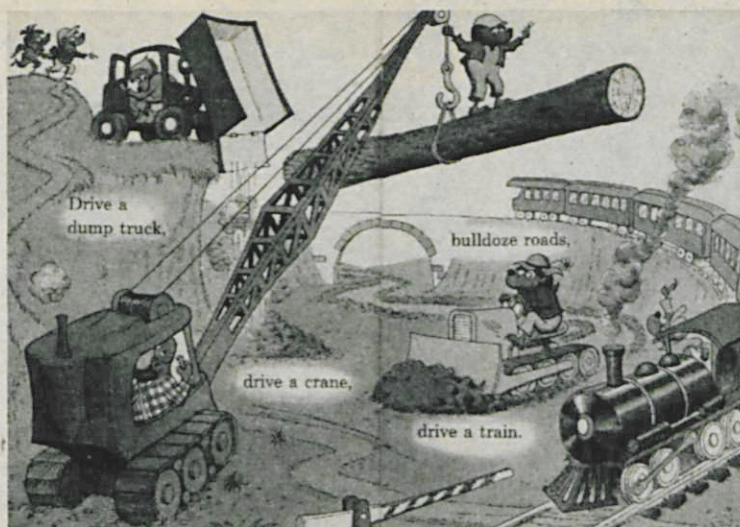
Micheline Wandor

## FILM



## Kid's Books

**She Bear, He Bear**  
Stan and Jan Berenstain  
(Collins and Harvill 95p)



At last a picture book that openly challenges sexism by showing what girls and boys can be when they grow up. The Berenstain's 'Old Hat, New Hat' and 'Bears in the Night' have always been a great hit with kids and the formula is as snappy and funny as ever in their latest 'She Bear, He Bear'. And if busy Bear Town comes over as too happily capitalist-loving and conformist, its non-sexist message does get through. □

C.R.W.

**That Crazy April**  
Lila Perl  
(Collins 1975) £2.50  
**The Loneliness of Mia**  
Gunnel Beckman  
(Bodley Head 1975) £1.55

A welcome recent development in publishing for older children is the appearance in this country of two novels that take into account today's Women's Liberation Movement. Not surprisingly, however, these books are not by British writers but from Scandinavia and the USA, where the Women's Movement, involving as it does changing relationships, changing aspirations, and all the upheavals that accompany a reassessment of roles within the family and society, has already found literary expression. Most British writing for children still seems ignorant of this fast growing public awareness and seems particularly unable, or unwilling, to break away from traditional sex-roles and social values, however unrelated to today's world.

The two books in question here — 'The Loneliness of Mia' and 'That Crazy April' both deal directly with the ways that the Women's Movement can influence the experience and expectations of young people today, in Sweden and the USA.

'The Loneliness of Mia' is Gunnel Beckman's second novel about adolescent Mia. Themes alluded to in the first novel ('Mia', Bodley Head 1974) concerning the choices open to women and men and the nature of their relationships are now further developed. Gunnel Beckman introduces unobtrusively the different perspectives of people at different stages of their lives. Mia's parents are real people, confused and hurt by their recent separation; her grand-



mother, whose death ends the book, is a woman of strength, courage and love, who has much to give her lonely granddaughter. Her relationship with Mia, which grows closer throughout the book, is movingly told.

Gran was once in the Suffragette movement and encourages Mia's growing interest in Women's Liberation. Mia and her friends then do a school project on it for a teacher, herself in the Movement. That Mia falls for an ultra male chauvinist is a truthful reflection of the confusions and contradictions of adolescent as well as adult sexual relationships.

It's a pity that the weakest section of the book should be the discussion on women's liberation. In 'Mia', Gunnel Beckman slipped in information on abortion by having Mia look through every book on the subject in the reference library. Here the discussion, though fairly and interestingly argued from different points of view, is even less success-

fully integrated into the book. The outdated slang used in translating from the original Swedish makes this more unwieldy ('darned unfair', 'Take the cake' etc). Hopefully this will not deter the adolescent reader — girl and boy — who will have much to gain from this otherwise fine and honest book.

Lila Perl's witty pictures of white suburban middle-class America in 'That Crazy April' is a novel in the best traditions of recent American satire. Her writing has the added advantage of a punchy style that does not underestimate the intelligence of the young reader. The relationship between eleven year old Cress and her Women's Movement activist Mom is the main theme of the book. Mom is Cress' problem. The book kicks off in style when Mom replaces her married name on the mail box with her maiden name. She has also reorganised the family's housework and cooking on a shared rota, and frequently leaves Dad and Cress behind to go to women's conferences.

Straight America, in the persons of Cress's friends — future naval cadet Davey who likes her cooking, and child fashion model Monique (silvery blonde hair and baton twirling) — also pose problems for Cress. Is it wrong for Cress to make cookies for Davey? Will Mom and Dad disapprove of Cress modelling in the bridal wear fashion show at Monique's invitation? How can Cress stop Mom campaigning at school against a teacher's sexist refusal to let her daughter join the metalwork class? Lila Perl's comical treatment of these issues does not lessen the seriousness of the choices confronting Cress, nor does it play down Mom's final acceptance of Cress' right to move forward in her own time. For eight year olds upwards. □

Rosemary Stones  
Childrens Rights Workshop

**A Question of Courage**  
Marjorie Darke  
(Kestrel £2.50)

In this historical novel for young people Marjorie Darke portrays the fervour and confusions of the Suffragette Movement, just before the First World War. Emily Palmer, a seamstress in working class Birmingham, meets Louise, a beautiful well-to-do militant who seduces her into the Movement. We trace Emily's evolution through a series of daring escapades — she replaces the flag from the local golf course with one of white, green and purple and whitewashes the grass with 'Votes for Women'. Our heroine, torn by family disputes happily escapes to London where she becomes one of Mrs Pankhurst's bodyguard. She takes part in disrupting a Liberal Party meeting, is eventually arrested, imprisoned and ignominiously forcefed. Marjorie Darke's rich and detailed narrative spares nothing. Only Emily's final doubts about the validity of violent action and the insubstantial character of Louise's brother, a Prince Charming incarnate, are not convincing in an otherwise solid and relevant book. □

Helen Pettit  
CISSY





## The Real Thing: An Anthology of British Photographs 1840-1950 on tour.

Mid-way between misty calotypes and gritty images of men-at-war in this important Arts Council exhibition hang a trio of portraits by one of the ace trivialisers of Woman, Cecil Beaton. To reinforce the image of Glamour Woman as man would have her seen, he took film stars as his models. There is Lilian Gish, (secretive, with a hint of innocence in her simpering stare), and Tallulah Bankhead, (deserted, desolate, longing and, presumably, lovelorn), and there is also a smouldering-eyed vamp sitting on Oriental cushions and done up like an advert for Turkish Delight. The Eternal Temptress. His technique is, of course, impeccable.

Nevertheless, studio portraits such as these have summed up the average person's idea of photography at almost every stage in its history, while the use of Woman as Object is as commonplace amongst serious amateurs for an 'exercise' as it is in the world of fashion and advertising. As a result, there are very few images of women in this show that tell you much about them as *people*.

Where Beaton's world was filled with frothy lace and, apparently, equally frothy brains, Horace Nicholls' pictures of Women at Work show the floury face of the bakery worker and the greasy overalls of a woman cleaning out a ship's boiler in Lowestoft, yet even this is not 'The Real Thing' where women's lives are concerned. Nicholls' shots of the jolly tram-driver and all the others – taken 60 years before the Equal Opportunities Bill – are just another example of morale-boosting Wartime propaganda with Woman as the tool. They operate on the idea of the work-ethic portrayed by some – though by no means all – of the early photographers whose picturesque documentation of rural and urban working life reassured the rich that revolution and unrest were a long way off. Early documentary pictures of Glasgow streets and alleyways are a little more frightening, a little nearer to the 'Real Thing' we know existed.

Some photographs that especially stuck in my mind were the prints taken from lantern slides made by Samuel Coulhurst in Salford in 1900 using a concealed camera. These did not fall into the Arts Council's category 'Documentary Into News', but the picture showing an almost boyishly-clad man reaching into his pocket for the coins with which to buy secondhand clothing from an equally impoverished woman in a Salford market place, told me as much about the life of the urban proletariat at the turn of the century as if Coulhurst had said "Look, I'm a photo-journalist" and worked for Magnum.

Photography is currently enjoying a new lease of life in this country, yet its fashionability and the rush to preserve the works of earlier exponents – Hill and Adamson, Julia Margaret Cameron – has not helped the reputation of the other, equally valuable photographers. This show rights the balance in some ways although the selection is rather arbitrary and much of the later work is unrepresentative of the artist's best. This is especially so in the case of Bill Brandt. Amongst the more notable photographers represented are William Fox-Talbot, who started the whole thing off, P.H. Emerson, who documented East Anglian life, and Frederick H. Evans, basically an architectural specialist who mastered the use of light in a way that gave his pictures the quality of timelessness. His original prints are superb.

Of the two women whose work is shown, Viscountess Hawarden concentrated on rather quaint family tableaux. Julia Margaret Cameron is well-known for her early portraits yet oddly, again, her best work is missing.

It is especially interesting for the inexperienced visitor to note the development of photo-journalism/news out of straight documentary. A selection of Nicholls' racecourse pictures on which Beaton (again), based his costume designs for 'My Fair Lady' mark the beginning of a new approach, culminating in the classic work of 'Picture Post' cameramen, Bert Hardy, James Jarche, (brilliant 1936 shot of showgirls backstage at the Windmill), and George Rodger, (heavy picture of the Mau-Mau's second-in-command in a Kenya dock in 1954, flanked by police more wild-eyed than himself).

The Arts Council will not like the criticism, but I find their presentation boring. Anybody who brings photography to the public's notice in this way is doing a service to our much misunderstood Art/Science, but the viewers who stumble in off the street are, in the main, not archivists and do not always understand the significance of what they see as a collection of snapshots and historical documents. I feel that choosing one or two of each individual's best works would have been less confusing. And while the Arts Council's gilt-edged frames provide security for the masterworks of greats like Cameron, Evans and Emerson, confusing captions at dwarf's eye-level shed little light on the events behind the cameos of yesteryear.

I would like to think that the Victoria and Albert Museum, now preparing 'The Land', a homogenous collection of landscape photography selected by Bill Brandt, will place captions beside all their pictures in order to avoid the eye-strain and inconvenience caused by checking out who is doing what and why in the Arts Council's otherwise totally excellent show. □

Valerie Wilmer

*'The Real Thing' can also be seen at  
 Graves Art, Sheffield 21 June-27 July;  
 Bolton Art Gallery 9 Aug-13 Sept;  
 City Museum and Art Gallery,  
 Birmingham 27 Sept-9 Nov; Bristol,  
 City Art Gallery 22 Nov-3 Jan 1976.*

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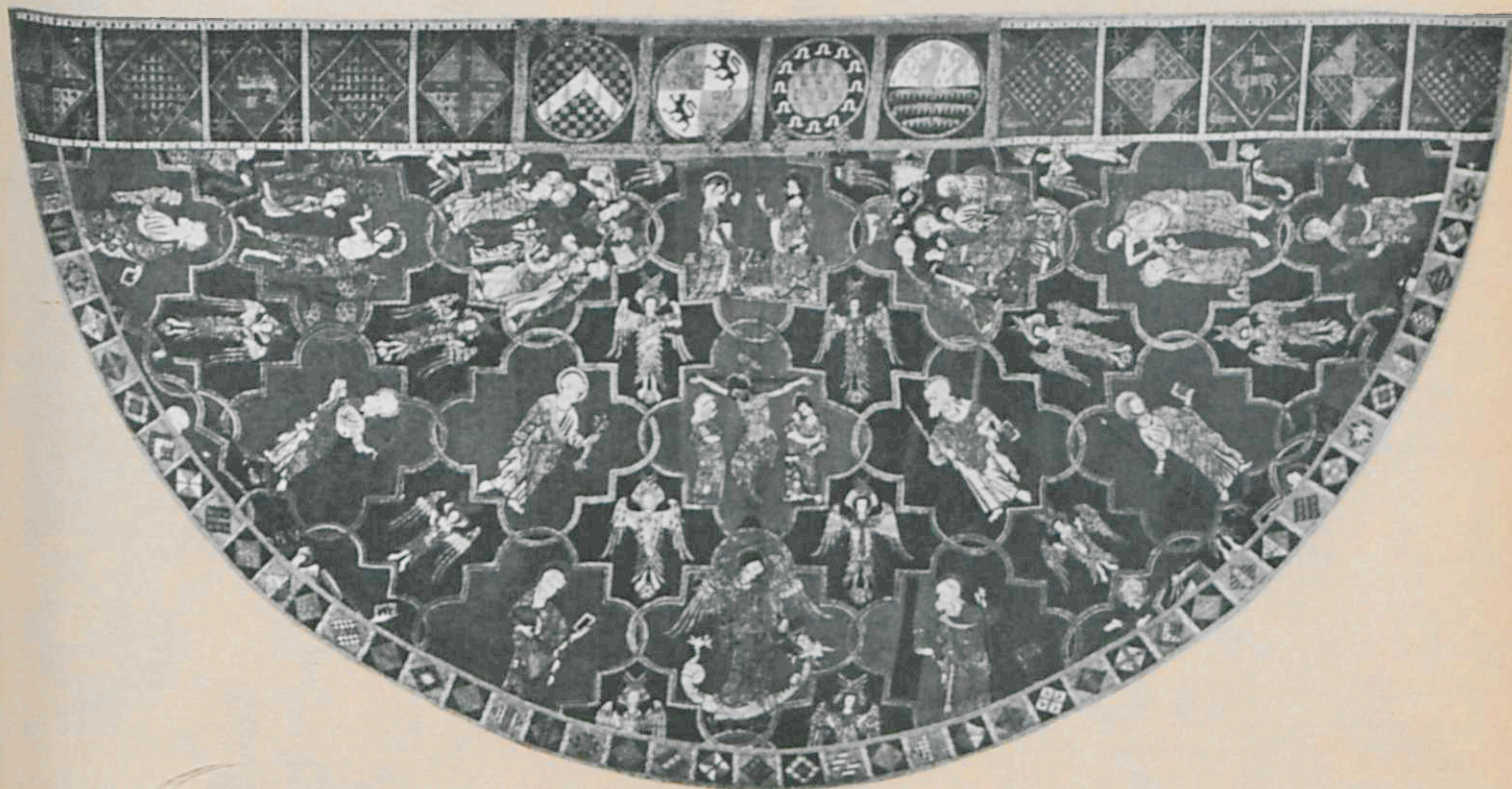
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*The Syon Cope, 1300–20, Opus Anglicanum*

In the Middle Ages English embroidery was considered to be equal if not superior to painting and sculpture; the embroiderers (both men and women) played an important part not only in the cultural but also in the economic life of the country. As society “progressed”, embroidery became an almost exclusively female activity, and over the centuries this relationship has been mutually destructive. Embroidery suffered from being categorised as women’s work. The same characteristics were ascribed to both women and embroidery; they were seen as mindless, decorative and delicate – like the icing on the cake, good to look at, adding taste and status, but devoid of significant content.

Women in their turn have suffered from their connection with embroidery. While it may have been sanity-saving art therapy for women imprisoned at home, at the same time it absorbed their restlessness and rebelliousness. It cost many others their eyesight and it set the precedent for women’s exploitation in industrial workshops and as home workers.

The temptation has been to throw needlework out with the feminine stereotype. But now, as women begin to re-evaluate themselves, they are looking again at their traditional skills, questioning not only the image of women but also the image of women’s work. The word for embroidery used to be “work”, and for many women it was a life’s work. A good portion of our cultural history lies in embroidery so to understand what happened to embroidery is to understand what happened to us. And, as John Berger says: “A people or class which is cut off from its own past is far less free to act as a people or class than one that has been able to situate itself in history. This is why and this is the only reason why the entire art of the past has now become a political issue.”

I was taught to embroider at the age of 6 or 7. I enjoyed the colours, the symmetry of the stitches and the sense of achievement which came with covering the hideous blue stencilled patterns. I felt superior to my brothers – I had a skill they lacked. But I soon learned that to interpret a given pattern was not considered creative and, moreover, embroidery was women’s work, soppy and sissy.

I stopped sewing and joined my brothers shooting at tins on the garden wall, hating the noise.

It wasn’t until I started meeting with other women in the Women’s Art History Collective that I rediscovered embroidery. We realised that as women we were excluded from the history of art not only because the few women who crashed the sex barrier in the fine arts are ignored in text books, but also because the arts in which women have been continuously active are excluded from courses in Art History. The crafts, the so-called decorative and applied arts which are the domain of women, are not seen as cultural transmitters like sculpture and oil painting.

### ***When painting and embroidery were different but equal***

In the 13th and 14th centuries, English embroidery, known as *Opus Anglicanum*, was greatly admired and was exported all over Europe. It was exceptionally fine embroidery but its value did not lie in its aesthetic appeal alone, any more than does the art which commands dizzy prices at Sotheby’s today. Then, as now, it was more a question of who was making it, for whom and why.

Embroidery, painting and sculpture shared the same function; the glorification of the ruling institutions, the church, royalty and the nobility. In churches there were embroidered hangings illustrating scenes from the Bible. Royal and noble households were hung with embroideries often, like the Bayeux tapestry (really an embroidery), celebrating political events. And embroidery was used to impress on everything from bed clothes to battle dress and banners.

Today the art market ensures the rarity value of paintings and preserves their status. In 1334 more blatant methods were used to protect the “value” of embroidery; a law was passed forbidding all persons below the rank of knighthood or with less than an income of £200 a year from wearing embroidered garments. Meanwhile royal greyhounds had collars embroidered with gold and silver gilt.

Unlike the art of today, the maker was of small importance compared to the art object, and embroidery was not valued as the personal expression of a gifted individual. Anyway, it was the



co-operative work of dyers, designers and needlepeople.

Before the mid-13th century embroidery had been mostly in the hands of women scattered round the country, but the majority of the surviving 13th and 14th century embroidery was produced in highly organised workshops centred around London. Recorded payments were no longer made to individual workers but to masters of workshops who were mostly men. Although the names of women do figure in royal records. There was Rose de Burford whose workshop embroidered a cope for Edward II and Mabel of Bury St. Edmunds who was commissioned to make a cope for Henry III. Both men and women sewed in the workshops, the women usually sewed the coloured thread and the men the gold.

Mabel of Bury St. Edmunds and Rose de Burford would have been embroidery guild members. In nearly all the guilds there were women members, and in many the names of women appear as founders. Out of the 500 guilds whose records survive, all but about five were formed of equal numbers of men and women, though smaller payments were sometimes exacted of women. They wore guild liveries and where a woman practiced her craft independently from her husband she was treated as a single woman, while if a man married a guild woman he was automatically admitted. Women served seven year apprenticeships in embroidery workshops. In 1369 Alison Cantour's father brought "a bill of complaint" against the man to whom she was apprenticed, claiming that he beat her and failed to provide for her.

In *Spare Rib* No.26, Catherine Hall described the circumstances which enabled a 14th century woman to participate in wage labour like embroidery. She wrote, "Generally there was no frontier between professional or business life and private life . . . activities all tended to go on in the same living/working area. The household was the centre both of domestic activity and mercantile activity."

As well as the guild workshops there were workshops attached to ecclesiastical establishments where both monks and nuns embroidered and illuminated manuscripts. There are marked stylistic links between miniature painting and needlework because the same people often worked in both media. The Reformation meant the end of ecclesiastical cultural activity in England.

### *Why painting and embroidery began to go their separate ways*

The root of embroidery's later history, I believe, lay in the class and sex division which existed amongst medieval embroiderers. Although both men and women worked in guild and ecclesiastical workshops, amateur embroidery was the province of noblewomen. Queens from Emma, queen to King Canute, through to the 18th century Queen Anne have been dedicated embroiderers, making it an integral part of an aristocratic woman's existence.

As England became a richer, more settled country under the Tudors, the wives of the wealthier merchant men began to imitate the lifestyle of the aristocracy, and there was a dramatic rise in the number of amateur women embroiderers.

The changes in society which led to the outbreak of embroidery amongst women was also reflected in the professional embroidery of the time. The finest surviving embroidery of the 15th and 16th centuries are a series of funeral palls intended not for royal but for civic ceremonies commissioned by city companies (Merchant Tailors, Fishmongers, etc.). Sheila Rowbotham describes what happened to the wives of these tradesmen: "As crafts became more intensely capitalised the wives of larger tradesmen no longer worked in the business. The roles of husband and wife were specifically differentiated. The external world of work became the sphere of men exclusively, and the internal world of the family and the household was the proper business of the women."

The possession of embroidery as well as its practice was of course a source of status. Embroidery spread like a fungus; bags, shoes, gloves, dresses, coats, cushions, caps, workbags, everything was embroidered. The increased demand led to a stiffening of regulations surrounding the production of embroidery and in 1561 Elizabeth I re-founded the embroiderers' guild. All members were men. The guild started searches of embroidery workshops to check on the quality of production. The last recorded search was made in 1710 and it was recorded that they "found many foreigners and many were refractory and used scurrilous language".

The class connotations of embroidery which had led to the rise of the amateur embroiderer took on new dimensions in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Embroidery totally dominated middle class women's lives, it became more of a sexual characteristic than a craft. "It is as scandalous for a woman not to know how to use a



*16th century portrait of Elizabeth, Countess of Southampton*

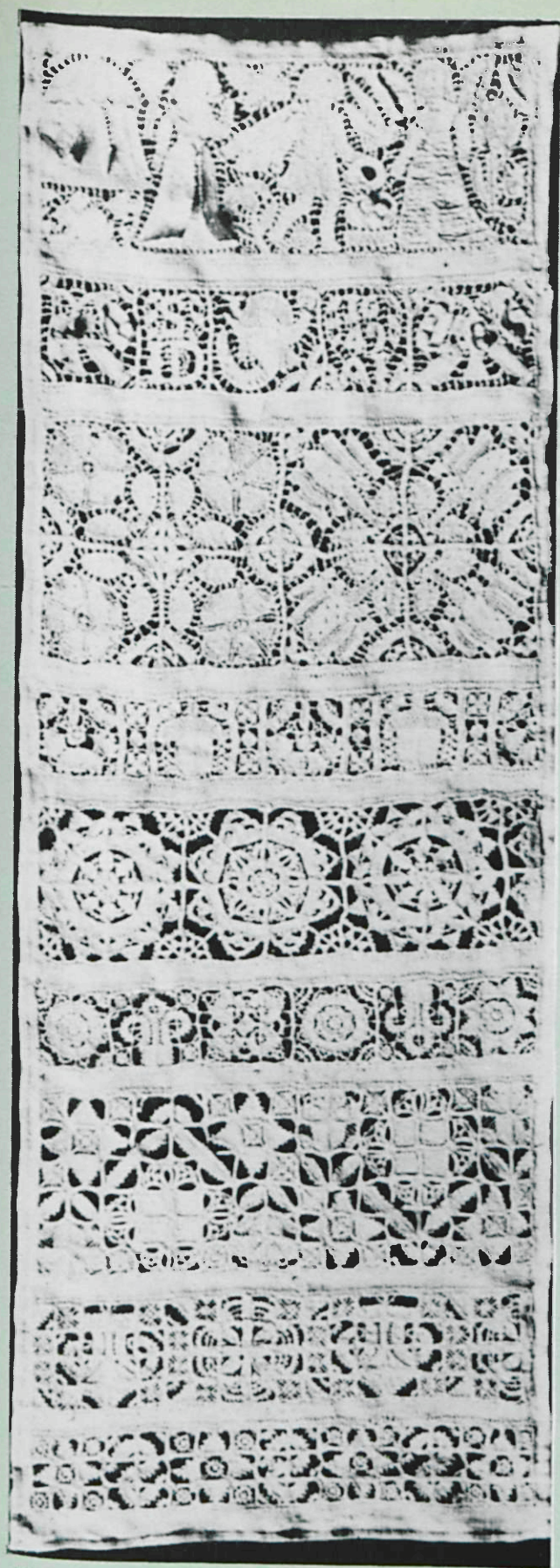


*17th century embroidered box*

needle as for a man not to know how to use a sword," wrote Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Anne Sherley's will gives an idea of the magnitude of women's work. She listed some of her embroidery: 10 carpets, 4 long cushions and embroidered upholstery for 6 stools and 6 chairs.

Middle class women clung to their amateur status — their husbands' status and thus their own depended on it. Two sisters, Mrs Dawes and Mrs Delaney carried on a long correspondence about embroidery; advising, encouraging each other and describing work they had seen. "The duchess of Queensbury's clothes pleased me best," wrote Mrs Delaney. "They were white satin embroidered, the bottom of the petticoat brown hills covered with all sorts of weeds,





17th century cutwork sampler with needlepoint fillings

and every breadth had an old stump of a tree, broken, ragged and worked in brown chenille, round which were twined nasturtiums, ivy, honeysuckles, periwinkles, convolvulus . . ." On one occasion Mrs Dawes expressed surprise that a friend's uncle "did not consider it necessary to apologise for his niece being an embroiderer by profession or pretend she was anything else."

Women had continued to embroider professionally. For example, it is recorded that in 1681 a woman called Margaret Wadding was fined half a crown and her work was cut up and burnt because a petticoat she had embroidered was considered sub-standard. Another woman, Elizabeth Watson, advertised in the press from 1696 to 1710: "All sorts of the richest wrought beds being much finer than

ever yet made for sale."

Mary Lamb (of Charles and Mary Lamb) worked as a professional embroiderer for 11 years. In 1815, she submitted an extraordinary article, *On Needlework*, to a women's magazine. Ostensibly discussing embroidery, she wrote a stinging comparison of men's and women's lives and work. Women, she said, should embroider for money or not at all, only then would they see their work as "real business" and allow themselves "real leisure". Moreover, by embroidering for love women were taking work away from professional embroiderers, and embroidery was the only employment open to women.

### Why embroidery became seen as inferior to painting

Already in the 16th century, Mary Queen of Scots, a dedicated embroiderer, provides a hint that embroidery had lost some of its status, in a conversation recorded by Nicholas White: "I asked hir grace howe she passed the tyme within? She sayd that all day she wrought with her nydill and that the diversitie of the colors made the worke seem less tedious, and contynued so long at it that veray payn made hir give over . . . Upon this occasion she entred into a pretty disputable comparison between karving, painting and working with the nydill, affirming painting in her awne opinion for the most commendable qualitie."

Unfortunately, Nicholas White did not think it worth recording Mary's reason for placing painting above embroidery, but it's significant that she felt there was a comparison to be made. She lived in a period of transition. Embroidery appeared to be following the same path as the other arts; sharing with literature the use of emblems, sharing with painting a concern with perspective, and as the maker began to count as much as the product, embroiderers began to sign their work in the same spirit of individualism as painters.

As artists lost their anonymity, the artist's position in society was crucial to the value placed on a work of art. Rachel Maines, writing in the *Feminist Art Journal*, neatly expresses the situation: "An unknown craftsperson 'whittles' wood, a known artist 'sculpts'." Art became synonymous with the media of middle class men — with painting and sculpture. Painting was labelled Art because it was considered to express the skills, knowledge, ideals, personality and power of the person who held the brush. Embroidery remained a craft because it was considered to express little beyond manual dexterity. Women held the needle and by the 18th century, women were not considered capable of injecting thought or personality into their work. "To model well in clay is considered strong minded and anti-feminine but to model badly in wax or bread is quite a feminine occupation." (George Paston, *Little Memoirs of the 18th Century*.)

Painters and sculptors were inspired by heavenly muses. Embroiderers had their roots in the ground. "Often without consciously innovating, they lend something of their own individuality to the decorating, a something which is infused into their work as it springs into being under their fingers, a full blooded warmth akin to nature's sap." Women and their products are continually identified with nature not culture.

Embroidery was associated with mundane functional objects — with the domestic sphere. "The fact that doilies are supposed to protect tables from dirt should not disqualify them from consideration as art," writes Rachel Maines. But it does. Embroidery, worn, drawn and sat upon is mortal and eventually wears out. Painting, up on the walls, remote from daily life, women and children, lives on as High Art.

Even when embroidery was divorced from functional objects and hung on walls it could not compete with painting as an investment. John Berger explains why oil painting became a status commodity: "Oil painting often depicts things. Things which in reality are buyable. To have a thing painted and put on canvas is not unlike buying it and putting it in your house. If you buy a painting you buy the look of the thing it represents." An embroidered picture can never achieve the slick *trompe l'oeil* effect of an oil painting. Moreover, embroiderers on the whole had no access to training in representational techniques and in comparison to oil painting embroidery appeared naive.

Paintings were also status symbols because of who had done them, once the idea of individual genius was firmly established. With embroidery, the object usually existed independently of the maker except in certain circumstances. If a man was wearing a beautiful waistcoat embroidered by his wife he would be congratulated on owning a good little needlewoman — a woman's embroidery was evidence, not of genius, but of love, honour and obedience. She was the equivalent of his pictures, both were his possessions. The price he paid for the pictures were proof of their value, his wife's needle-





*Embroidered self-portrait, embroidering a portrait of George III, by Mary Knowles*

work was proof of her value.

Besides being homemade, amateur and woman-dominated, embroidery was further damned because it was worked from a pre-drawn pattern – it's an interpretive art. "Miss Hare sells all kinds of silks, gauze or muslin, painted or stained in most elegant taste for ladies" (18th century pattern maker advertising her work). And a quality most valued in art is originality and individualism.

Opus Anglicanum was the co-operative work of dyers, designers and needlepeople. Contemporary frescoes were similarly collaborative works. But the gap between painter and pattern narrowed while it widened between the embroiderer and her pattern, until it was less a question of co-operation than dictation. In 1770 *The Ladies Magazine or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, appropriated Solely to their Instruction and Amusement* appeared, and provided women with mass-produced embroidery patterns. It was followed by *Fashionable Magazine or Ladies and Gentlemen's Repository of Taste, Elegance and Novelty*.

### **How women themselves viewed embroidery**

To some extent women have colluded in the idea that embroidery is purely a functional rather than an expressive activity. In a society deeply imbued with the work ethic, embroidery was often the only work open to middle class women which rewarded them with concrete evidence of effort and some sense of achievement. "Because of the pressure on women to be constantly productive, it is hardly surprising that the hundreds of hours devoted to their art form are rationalised as the creation of useful goods." (Rachel Maines.)

Then there were the religious overtones surrounding embroidery. Because of its religious roots, embroidery was seen as a pious act, and the subject matter of embroidery was frequently biblical. Dr Johnson wrote despairingly in 1758, "Kitty knows not at 16 the difference between a Protestant and a Papist because she has been employed three years in filling the side of a clout with a hanging that it to represent Cranmer in the flames. And Dolly, my eldest girl is now unable to read a chapter in the Bible having spent all her time working an interview between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba."

Since the 17th century a girl's childhood had been structured by a series of embroidery projects. Martha Edlin's childhood was typical. Aged 8 she finished her first sampler and signed it with pride, Martha Edlin 1668. It took her another year to complete her white work sampler, then she had to begin an embroidered casket which she signed in 1671. Her final task was to embroider a jewel

box and she finished it in 1673, aged 13, when her training was considered complete and she set herself her own work.

For women, samplers were both a means of self expression and a source of communication. They sewed gift samplers to demonstrate affection for friends.

*Dear Debby*

*I love you seriously*

*My heart retains a grateful sense*

*Of your past kindness*

*When will the hours of our*

*Separation be at an end*

*Preserve in your bosom a Remembrance*

*Of your affectionate*

*Deborah Ian.*

*Bristol*

*May 1st 1778*

There were endless religious samplers but there were also commemorative samplers (recording an earthquake in 1692, celebrating the peace of 1802, cataloguing family births and deaths), educational samplers and political samplers like the sampler addressed to the man who campaigned to reduce the hours children worked in factories.

*A token of respect from Martha Cook*

*To the Rev. R.S. Bull Incumbent of Burley*

*The Factory Child's Friend and Protector*

*May the Lord bless you and make you prosper*

*In the factory child's cause.*

Sometimes misery, rebellion and frustration are evident in the stitches: "Polly did it and she hated every stitch she did," "Jane King will be happy when Christ shall make her free" or the following verses addressed to Robert by a 15-year-old girl in 1840:

*... I ask not for a kinder tone, for thou wert ever kind*

*I ask not for less frugal fare, my fare I do not mind.*

*I ask not for attire more gay, if such as I have got*

*Suffice to make me fair to thee, for more I murmur not.*

*But I would ask some share of hours that you on clubs bestow*

*Of knowledge which prize so much, might I not something know*

*Subtract from meetings amongst men, each eve an hour for me.*

*Make me companion of your soul as I may safely be.*

*If you will read I'll sit and work, then think when you're away*

*Less tedious I shall find the time, dear Robert of your stay.*

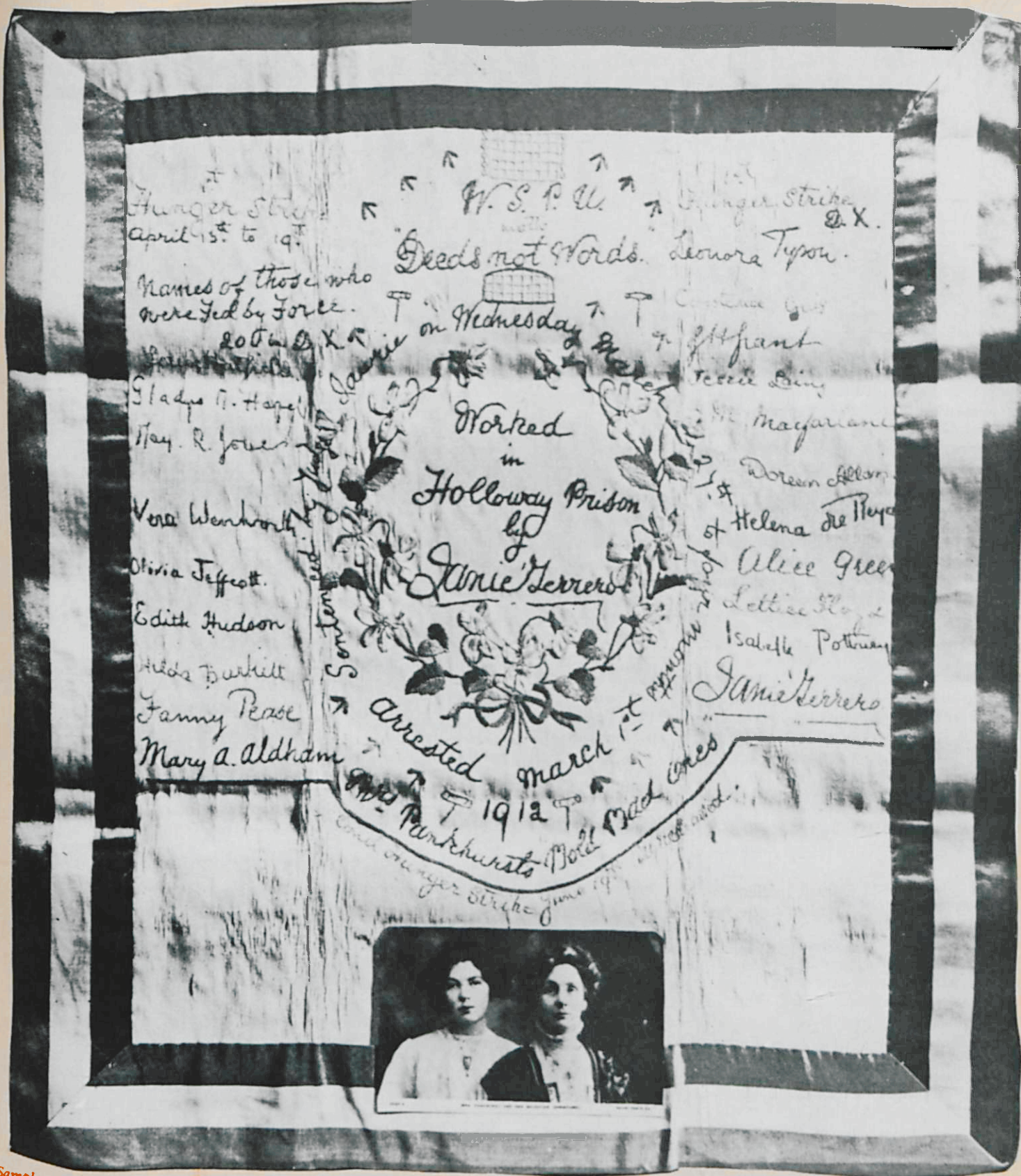
From samplers many women graduated to needlepainting which became increasingly fashionable in the late 18th century. Mary Linwood was the best known of the women needlepainters. In 1787 an exhibition of over a hundred of her glazed, framed embroidered pictures opened at the Hanover Square Rooms in London and subsequently toured the country. One critic wrote, "The Ladies of Great Britain may boast in the person of Miss Linwood an example of the force and energy of the female mind, free from any of those ungraceful manners which have in some cases accompanied strength of genius in a woman. Miss Linwood has awaked from its long sleep the art which gave birth to painting." She turned down £3,000 for one of her copies of old master paintings – "Ladies" didn't earn money – and presented it instead to Queen Victoria.

Mary Linwood's work was not given status in its own right, but only in so far as it resembled the admired paintings of the day. Attitudes haven't changed much since then. The needleworks which are called Art and hung in West End galleries are the Navaho blankets and American quilts which look like the currently fashionable abstract art. Representational and floral embroidery hangs with the antique trade.

### **What happened to embroidery with the industrial revolution**

One reason for the increase in needlepainting and needle etching was the development of industrial workshops which produced cheap embroidered furnishings and clothing. The class division within needlework became painfully explicit. In 1798 an Italian named Luigi Ruiffini set up a workroom in Glasgow where girls of 6 and 7 years old embroidered flowers on muslin while young male apprentices were sent to train as pattern drawers at the Glasgow Trustees' Academy of Design. By 1793 similar workrooms had sprung up all over Scotland. In 1818 a new material was produced called point net and soon thousands of women were employed embroidering in workshops in and around Nottingham and in Essex. Then a woman called Mrs Jameson evolved a new type of decoration for muslin which could be embroidered at home without a frame. The material with the design, the time it was to take to





Sampler worked in Holloway prison with the names of those who were forcibly fed. 1912, by Janie Terrero

sew, and the rate of payment stamped upon it, was distributed to women who worked on it at home. The women would often work as a group, paying children 1d a week to keep their needles threaded. By 1857, 400,000 women were homeworking muslin in Ireland and 80,000 women in Scotland. In 1828 a machine was invented which embroidered and was worked by three women and four girls, and by the 1870's machine embroidery had largely put professional hand embroiderers out of work.

There was an embroidery renaissance during the 19th century, partly in reaction to machine embroidery and partly as an accompaniment to religious revivals. Its reverberations are still with us, embodied in groups like the Embroiderers Guild which teaches, collects and encourages needlework. But has the position of embroidery really changed since the 18th century? It has, as far as the

position of women has changed. When more women entered the art world, they brought needlework with them; they began to teach embroidery in art schools in the 1890's, and today it is grudgingly accepted as an art technique. But the basic values and the class division within embroidery remain thoroughly fossilised. Embroidery practiced as a craft, used on clothes, cushions, is still considered inferior to the fine arts. The women who embroider at home, instead of regarding their work with pride, refer to it depreciatingly as their occupational therapy, while outside the home low-paid women workers machine embroider the back pockets of pre-faded jeans. □

by Rosie Parker

Rosie wants to emphasise that this work on embroidery is just a beginning. She would like to hear from other women who are interested in embroidery.



# Breast Self-Examination

## What are you looking for?

You are looking for changes. It is important to do this examination regularly so that you get to know your breasts and therefore spot any changes, like the following:

- Unusual lump, thickening or local lumpy areas. (Many lumps give the feeling of rubbing the flat of your hand over a knuckle of the other one, but even soft lumps should be properly investigated.)
- Unusual change in the size or shape of a breast.
- One breast unusually lower than the other.
- Puckering or dimpling of the skin of the breast.
- Unusual drawing back or turning in of the nipple.
- Discharge from the nipple.
- Skin trouble on or around the nipple, or change in skin texture.
- Swelling of the upper arm.
- Enlarged lymphatic nodes. These are situated inside your body along the outer part of the breast and extend up into the armpit and along the front of the shoulder to the neck.
- Pain or discomfort not felt before, and not confined to the time just before a period.

## How to do it.

The following should be done regularly and systematically every month. If you are of child bearing age it is best to do it immediately after your period, on the same day of your cycle each month. It is important to be warm and relaxed while you are doing it.

### A. Sit or stand up straight in front of a mirror:

Look for changes of size or shape in each breast. Most people have breasts of unequal shape or size. It is important to make sure that there has not been a change in the normal appearance of *your* breasts.

Check for puckering or dimpling of the skin. You may have to lift the breasts to see underneath.

Check nipples for changes or discharge but do *not* squeeze them. Raise arms above head and check for changes, paying attention also to the area which goes up to the armpit. Turn to each side slightly so that you can see the sides of your breast too.

Lean forward, with arms still raised, and check again for any unusual changes.

### B. Lie down:

The breast tissue can be encouraged to spread out if the shoulder under the breast that you are examining is raised, by putting a cushion or a folded towel under it.

Examine each breast as follows, using the left hand for the right breast and the right hand for the left breast. Use the front part of the flat of your hand, *not* the fingertips, keeping the fingers straight and together. Pressing gently, so that the breast tissue underneath can be felt, proceed as demonstrated.

At first it is difficult to judge how much pressure to use, so it might help to ask someone experienced (not necessarily a doctor) to show you. Do *not* squeeze or pinch the breast. Remember that it is *changes* that you are looking for. When you examine your own breasts regularly and become familiar with them you will be in a better position than a doctor to notice any changes. You will be able to inform your doctor of any alteration and say that the symptom is new, and that it is not confined to your pre-menstrual body changes.

Remember also, that if you do find a change in one of your breasts, it is not necessarily caused by cancer. In roughly nine out of ten cases the symptoms are benign. However, you cannot find out the cause on your own so you should seek medical advice without delay. □



1. Press gently the lower outer quarter of your breast.



4. Do the same for the upper outer quarter of your breast.







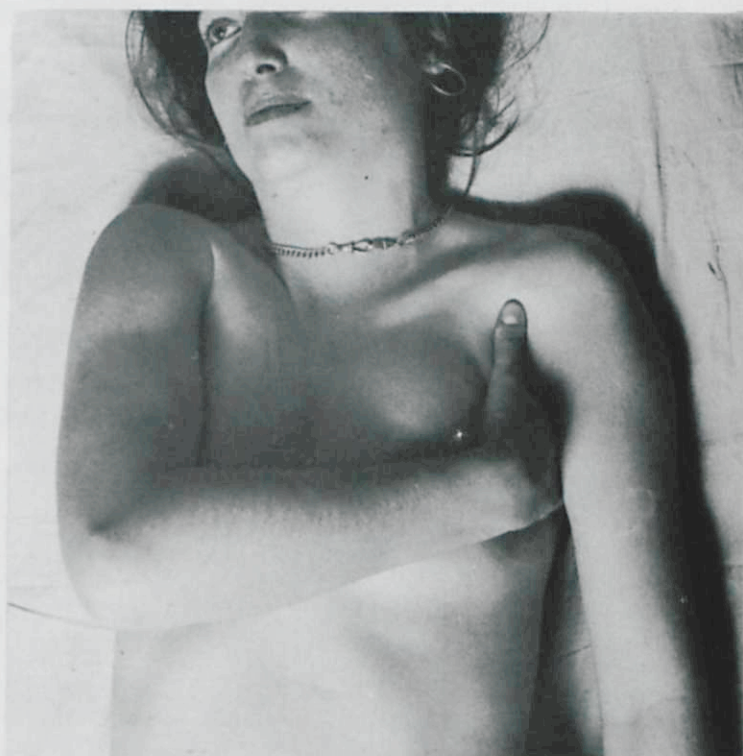
2. Raise your arm and rest it under your head, then feel the lower inner quarter of your breast.



3. Leaving your arm up, press the top inside quarter of your breast. Work towards the nipple and feel round the nipple too.



5. Lower your arm and use both hands to feel the middle section of your breast.



6. With your arm lowered, feel the upper outer quarter of your breast again and move your hand up to finish by feeling under the armpit.



One of the greatest recording artists of all time has just made the new Joan Baez album.



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AMLH 64527

Produced by David Kershenbaum and Joan Baez

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